University of Alberta

Socio-economic Factors and the Educational Goals of Youth

by

Sherilyn MacIntosh ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education

in

Sociology of Education

Department of Educational Policy Studies

Edmonton, Alberta

Spring, 2002

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Degree: Master of Education

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between social class background and the educational goals of high school students. Students (N=117) at three Alberta high schools completed a 52 item questionnaire developed in order to measure social class, educational plans and a number of other socio-economic variables studied in this research. The methods of data analysis used in this study include factor analysis and cross-tabular analysis. The study confirmed the main hypothesis of the thesis, that social class background positively influences educational goals. An important contribution of this research is the addition of social and cultural variables to a study of educational goal setting, along with the attempt to operationalize these concepts.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisor, Gerry Taylor for the time he spent working with me so that I could complete this thesis. I would also like to thank my family and my husband Charles for their support throughout this time.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM & THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

> Though educational levels in all Western democracies have seen tremendous improvement during the last forty years, glaring inequalities in wealth, income and status persist (Swartz, 1997, p. 190).

As we begin the early twenty-first century, it is important to acknowledge, as Swartz does, that the expansion of educational provision since World War II has not greatly alleviated vast economic and social inequality in industrialized societies despite intentions to the contrary. The expansion of educational opportunity was at first introduced as an attempt to level the playing field between the social classes so that individuals from the lower social classes would have equal access to education that led to high paying occupations. However, the provision of greater access to education has not served to create social equality. Though the school system is often depicted as an egalitarian social institution in which all students have an equal chance to succeed, it tends rather to reproduce the status quo and moreover legitimate this social and economic inequality by portraying it as reflecting unequal ability across the population (Bowles & Gintis, 1976). The problem with this portrayal is that it obscures how a student's material conditions (social class) have shaped their future educational and career goals (Bourdieu, 1993; 1996; Oakes, 1985).

Economic division and occupational stratification are characteristic features of industrial capitalist societies. It can be argued that, far from being a neutral playing field, the school has become instrumental in maintaining this inequality in modern society (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Bourdieu, 1993). To the extent that this is the case, it is evident that the role played by the school system is of paramount importance. For it is as students that youth first experience the academic success or failure that has an important bearing on the type of post-secondary education and occupation that they envisage for themselves (Oakes, 1985; Bourdieu, 1993). Summarizing Bourdieu's work in this area, Johnson (in Bourdieu, 1993) says that

> Bourdieu's work in the sociology of education has shown ...that schooling serves to reinforce rather than diminish social differences, [for] the culture it transmits is largely that of the dominant classes, and it tends to perceive and classify as natural talent, and thus natural superiority, levels of knowledge among students which are in fact largely the result of an informal learning process taking place within the family (p.18).

Current trends regarding the relationship between school and the labour market are also of importance when considering the educational and occupational goals of youth. Recently, there has been a resurgence of support in the academic community for human capital theory's interpretation of the relation between formal education and the occupational destinations of youth. The main premise of this theory is that individuals who invest time and money in education increase their worth to potential employers and thus their occupational opportunities (Abercrombie et al., 1994). Hence, human beings become a type of resource to be cultivated and invested in to ensure a return of economic capital (Abercrombie, 1994). This theory thereby takes it as self-evident that youth have a responsibility to treat themselves as a commodity to be invested in. Social and economic circumstances in which individuals first find themselves are disregarded. According to human capital theory, differences in income are simply a product of the effort expended by individuals to contribute to themselves and society. Thus, to claim that personal investment is the major determinant of occupational destination and future economic status is to seriously downplay those social and economic circumstances that shape the individuals capacity for self-determination (Abercrombie, 1994).

Certainly, it is true that early versions of human capital theory (Porter, 1965) in the 1960's and 1970's prompted government investment in education. Nonetheless, there is no provision in human capital theory for the possibility that institutions like the school are unequal playing fields that benefit and encourage the economically secure and constrain the underprivileged (Bourdieu, 1990). It is for this reason that the recent resurrection of human capital theory is cause for concern. The focus of this theory on individual autonomy and personal talent and achievement potentially forms a basis for "blaming the victim" of poverty for his or her lot in life, and for excusing the government from taking responsibility for the well being of the disadvantaged.

THEORETICAL GROUNDING FOR THE THESIS

It was stated earlier that young people begin to formulate their educational and occupational goals during their years in school and that the school encourages each student to aspire to particular types of education and careers appropriate to it's assessment of the student's ability. But the education or career that a student chooses is also shaped by the constraints of his or her life circumstances.

This study has as its central focus, the relationship between high school students' social class background and their formation of post-secondary (post-high school) educational goals. Previous research that has examined this relationship offers evidence that material circumstances play a role in determining the educational plans of students (Bellamy, 1994; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Bourdieu,1985, 1990,1996; Gaskell, 1992; Harker, 1984; Kahl, 1953; Kahl & Gilbert, 1993; Oakes, 1985, McClelland, 1990; Maxwell & Maxwell, 1994, 1995; Porter, 1965; Porter, Porter & Blishen, 1982; Swartz, 1997; Taylor, 1978). There is also a theoretical perspective that provides an explanation for this observed relationship between economic background and goals.

The conceptual framework provided by Pierrre Bourdieu's "theory of practice" is especially useful in understanding the process by which young people's economic circumstances impact upon their chances and the choices they make within a capitalist society. The concepts of habitus, social capital and cultural capital are all assumed to be influenced by a student's economic background and to, in turn influence student goal-setting.

Bourdieu's notion of "habitus" postulates how students come to aspire to different educational goals. Habitus can be broadly defined as a set of enduring dispositions including attitudes and values formed from early socialization and exposure to certain life conditions (Bourdieu, 1985) such as access to economic resources that help shape how people interact with their social environment and formulate future goals (Bourdieu, 1990). It can be argued that access and exposure to a certain set of values and dispositions either contributes to or undermines an individual's position within social structures. Specifically, according to Bourdieu, there is a disparity between the values of the socially and economically disadvantaged and the dispositions and values that are reinforced within social institutions like the school. It is posited that when students calculate the probability of their achieving a given goal, this assessment is influenced by their material circumstances. Because students who are members of different social classes have access to dissimilar life experiences, and exposure to different values, both their social relationships and their estimation of their personal capabilities will be influenced by these different experiences. In accordance with the concept of habitus, thus, it is expected that students from different social classes will have dissimilar perceptions of what they consider personally possible in the way of future educational goals (Bourdieu, 1990).

In Bourdieu's framework the social classes are also differentiated by their access to certain types of *capital* that are highly valued and rewarded by the school (Bellamy, 1994). Capital takes on various forms, including economic, social, cultural and symbolic. In Bourdieu's conceptual framework, cultural and social capital are presented as particularly significant determinants of class differences in the future goals set by youth. Access to both cultural and social capital are assumed to be influenced by the economic circumstances of the family (Bourdieu, 1993).

Bourdieu defines cultural capital as specific skills and forms of knowledge resulting from previous socialization that assist in the comprehension of linguistic patterns, behavioral familiarity, and conformity and comfort within a particular social context (Boudieu, 1990, 1993). According to Bourdieu, the cultural capital that is rewarded within the educational system is the kind most commonly possessed by students who come from the more affluent economic classes. In essence, cultural capital contributes to the student's ability to receive and decode information conveyed in a school. It is important to note that methods of receiving and decoding cultural capital are not taught by the school. However, in spite of this, the school evaluates each student's ability and potential on the basis of his or her ability to receive and decode (interpret) the information it conveys.

Bourdieu uses the term social capital to refer to the social connections and relationships that are forged among members of the economically dominant class that benefit their children in the context of the educational system. This term also refers to the involvement of more affluent parents at the school and their familiarity with the educational system. Both aspects of social capital benefit students from these families. The informal learning processes that occur within dominant class families (as a result of their familiarity with dominant class institutions, values and various social connections) contribute to the educational success of their offspring and, moreover elevate his or her future goals. Students from less privileged backgrounds are less likely to be socialized in a way that supports success in school and lofty goal-setting(Bourdieu, 1993).

During my review of the research, two studies emerged that support the structurally constrained nature of student goal-setting. In a study of students attending a Canadian working-class high school, Gaskell (1992) investigated the students' school program choices and their plans for future education and work. Her research indicates that structural constraints significantly impact on students' educational and career goals. Joseph Kahl's (1953) much earlier research also shares an affinity with the theoretical framework adopted for the present study. Specifically, Kahl investigated the aspirations of working-class boys who were both successful and unsuccessful in school. Through interviews he found that the majority of "common man boys" from disadvantaged backgrounds were willing to accept "their lot in life" and aspire to the lower paying jobs they considered inevitable (Oakes, 1985, 1992; Gaskell, 1992; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Bourdieu, 1990, 1996). It is the structural constraints of social class in relation to the aspirations of youth that is the central focus of this thesis. Priority has been given to student's goal-setting in this study rather than status attainment because to possess something one must first "want to have it" (Bellamy, 1994; Bourdieu, 1990, 1993, 1996; Porter, 1965).

THE RESEARCH QUESTION

Adopting the theoretical framework briefly presented in the previous section, the study reported in this thesis involves an empirical study of the relationship between the social class background of youth attending local high schools and the post-secondary educational goals of these students. Thus, the research question guiding this study is as follows:

Is social class background related to the educational goals of youth attending high-school?

Rather than focus on individual talent, inherent personality traits, or free will as determinants of student goal-setting, this study will focus on how students' varying economic circumstances (economic circumstances of their family) influence their goal-setting. In other words, this research will concentrate on the socio-economic determinants of educational goal-setting rather than focusing on students' individual personalities

(Sewell, 1969). Therefore, the main independent variable in this study is social class background and the main dependent variable is educational plans.

GUIDING MODEL AND HYPOTHESES

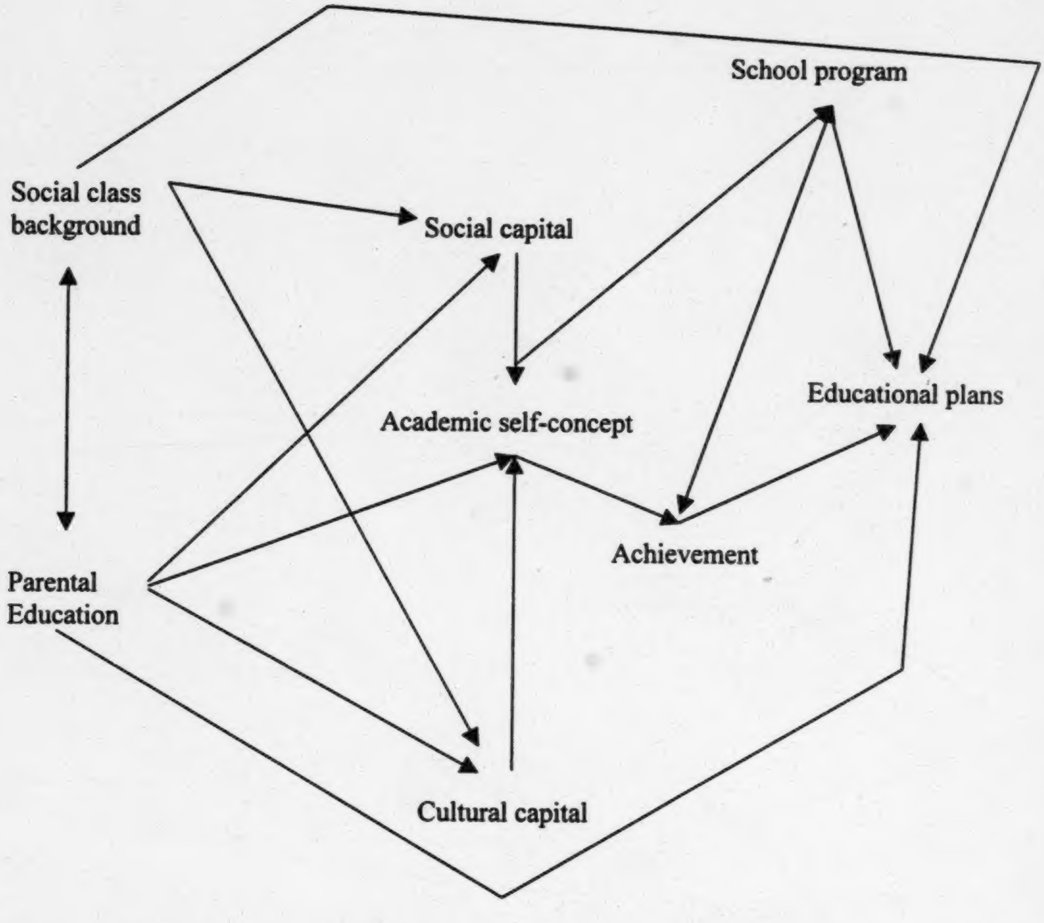
The "Wisconsin Model" of status attainment (Figure 1) developed by Sewell (et. al 1969) is useful in conceptualizing the process of educational goal-setting. The causal model developed by these researchers during the1960's is especially important because it incorporates social structural as well as social psychological determinants of educational and occupational attainment, but postulates that economic background plays a significant role in shaping the educational plans of youth. At this point it is important to outline some of the main assumptions that will guide the present study.

It is assumed that a highly important feature of the family is its situation (social class). The family's economic circumstances in turn impact the degree of social and cultural resources available to the student. Another very important feature of the family is the level of parental education. It has been shown in the literature that highly educated parents tend to give their children high levels of social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1990).

It is also assumed that the amount of social capital a student possesses influences his /her educational plans. Social capital can take the form of parental involvement their child's schooling and elements of social capital, such as high parental participation in school activities, are assumed to encourage youth to set lofty goals (Bourdieu, 1990). In contrast, student's whose parents participate less in their education are expected to be less likely to have high educational plans. Cultural capital is also assumed to be of significance in the goal formation of youth. Specifically, the extent to which youth are exposed to "high culture" through their parents is expected to influence the educational goals they set.

Academic self-concept is another important variable in this thesis. Students' academic self-concept is thought to be influenced not only by their social class position, but by the amount of social and cultural capital they possess. Students who are socialized by their parents into the middle-class values reinforced by the school are likely to have higher academic self-concepts. Students with high academic self-concept are more likely to have high academic achievement and be in high school programs (Marsh & Yeung, 1998), and student achievement and program are thought to be important determinants of educational goals (Taylor, 1978).

FIGURE 1


School program
Social class background
Social capital
Educational plans
Academic self-concept
Achievement
Parental Education
Cultural capital

Theoretical Model for Educational Goal-setting Adapted from Sewell, 1969.

HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses will guide the research reported in this thesis.

Hypothesis (1)

a. Students from high social class backgrounds are more likely than their counterparts to have high educational goals.

b. Students whose parents have high levels of education are more likely than their counterparts to have high educational goals.

Hypothesis (2)

Students from high social class backgrounds are more likely than their counterparts to have parents with high levels of education.

Hypothesis (3)

Students from high social class backgrounds and students whose parents have high levels of education are more likely than their counterparts to:

a. possess high levels of cultural capital.

b. possess high levels of social capital.

c. have a high academic self- concept.

d. have high grades.

e. be enrolled in advanced (academic) school programs.

Hypothesis (4)

Students who have high levels of cultural capital are more likely than their counterparts to:

a. have high degrees of social capital.

b. have a high academic self-concept.

c. have high grades.

d. be enrolled in an advanced (academic) school program.

e. have high educational goals.

Hypothesis (5)

Students with high levels of social capital are more likely than their counterparts to:

a. have a high academic self-concept.

b. have high grades.

c. be enrolled in advanced (academic) school programs.

d. have high educational goals.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study is based on questionnaire data gathered from a sample of 117 Alberta high school students attending three local high schools. The study considers a number of socio-economically shaped determinants of student goal-setting, including social class(main focus), parental education, social capital, cultural capital, academic self-concept, academic achievement, and school program (Bellamy, 1994; Bourdieu, 1990; 1996; Gaskell, 1992; Looker, 1994; Porter, 1965; Porter et al, 1982; Taylor, 1978; Van Stone et. al, 1994).

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This project takes an unusual approach insofar as it attempts to measure the concepts of social and cultural capital and ascertain their contribution to educational goal-setting. This approach is pertinent to exploring the effect of social class background on the less formal learning processes that take place within the family (Bourdieu, 1990; 1996). Hopefully, the addition of these concepts will contribute in a unique way to the vast body of literature concerned with the relationship between social class background and goals. This study will thus be of interest to academics, educators, and others who seek to understand how socio-economic factors help shape the educational goal-setting on the part of high school youth in contemporary Alberta.

ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

The chapters in the remainder of this thesis will be as follows:

a. Chapter two will provide a literature review and the theoretical position of the thesis.

b. Chapter three will describe the sample, the research instrument and the data analysis techniques that were used in the study. As well, this chapter will provide a discussion of the ethical considerations that are pertinent to the study.

c. Chapter four will provide a description of the findings of the study and relate the data to theory.

d. Chapter five will provide a summary of the thesis, discuss implications of the findings, and make suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL GROUNDING AND LITERATURE REVIEW

> Dussardier at last realized that they had come to help him; and he said nothing, fearing to compromise them. Besides, he felt a kind of shame at seeing himself raised to the social rank of a student, the equal of these men who had such white hands (Flaubert, 1941, p.31).

This short passage from *Sentimental Education* is the expression of one man's self-consciousness regarding his position in a class society. Though this specific quotation simply communicates the subjective experience of one particular man at a particular moment, the consequences of living in a class divided, economically stratified society reach far beyond a mere instant. The objective structures of social classes in western society shape the subjective life-experience of individuals, their choices, their chances, and most importantly, their conception of what is personally attainable.

THE STRUCTURAL CONSTRAINT OF SOCIAL CLASS

The advent of industrial capitalism gave rise to fundamental economic changes and, in turn, resulted in corresponding changes in social relations and structures. Specifically this entailed the alienation of the worker from the means of production, the production of commodities through wage labour, and the realization of an economic surplus (Abercrombie et al, 1994). The division and stratification of labour, necessary for profitable mass production, means that the economic status of individuals is contingent upon their relation to the means of production. Hence, class division and occupational hierarchy are products of the division of labour in industrial, capitalist societies. Different occupations are afforded varying degree of status and economic reward, and theoretically, individuals occupy positions on a vertical status hierarchy commensurate with their level of skill and ability (Oakes, 1992; Gaskell, 1992; Gilbert & Kahl, 1993; Porter, 1965; Porter, Porter & Blishen, 1982). Importantly, positions are not arbitrarily assigned, rather, placement in this hierarchy is determined by the economic benefits individuals receive for engaging in a specific occupation. Thus, a social class structure arises from the hierarchical division of labour. In this study, social class position is defined as the position one occupies in relation to the labour market and the economic resources available as a result of this position (Tumin, 1967). Individuals receive varying economic rewards contingent upon their occupation, and this economic division largely determines class position within capitalist social systems (Porter, 1965; Tumin, 1967).

Importantly, the economic rewards associated with occupation are also often contingent upon the level and type of education attained by an individual. Hence, the first step in attaining certain economic rewards is to aspire to high educational and occupational goals. Given the importance of education in relation to the occupational structure, the school is an important context to explore as a setting in which the young begin to contemplate these future goals. It is essential to realize, however, that within industrial societies the complex occupational structure and division of labour requires that different individuals aspire to varying educational and occupational goals. Basically, members of the population must want to fill a range of positions in the labour market to ensure the maintenance of the status quo (Porter, Porter & Blishen, 1965). It is of particular interest that individuals come to "fit" into the capitalist labour market through their educational and occupational goals, supporting structurally unequal relationships between the social classes. Although the material consequences associated with occupation and social class, are not entirely pre - determined, one cannot deny the impact that economic resources, or lack thereof, have upon individual members of a self interested, capitalist social milieu (Gilbert & Kahl, 1993; Marx, 1844 in Hoare, 1975).

For the purposes of this thesis, social class position is posited to be a primary of the educational goals of youth. It is assumed that an individual's experience with particular material conditions has an important impact on his or her values and future goals (Marx, 1844 as cited in Hoare, 1975). This is not to posit that individual agency is not existent. However, material affluence or deprivation influences individual subjectivity to the extent that the social is primarily determined by the economic (Bourdieu, 1990; Marx, 1844 as cited in Hoare, 1975; McClelland, 1990).

Thus, the main goal of this study is to explore how economic differences between individuals influence their educational goals. Specifically, it is predicted that economic differences between the social classes will be associated with varying educational goals. The theoretical portion of the thesis will firstly challenge the popular view of education as an egalitarian institution in which individuals are given an equal opportunity to develop their capacities and pursue their dreams. Instead, it will focus upon social factors that shape the educational experience and the development of educational plans. Theory and supporting research will be drawn upon in an attempt to explain the relationship between economic condition and the subjectivity of the individual in the formation of educational goals (Kahl, 1953, 1993; Porter, 1965; Porter & Blishen, 1982).

A CRITIQUE OF EGALITARIAN IDEOLOGY AND PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPLANATIONS FOR PERSONAL AMBITION AND ACHIEVEMENT

To conceptualize how social class position influences educational plans, it is necessary to describe and then challenge the functionalist account of the educational system as an egalitarian social institution. The functional orientation will be reviewed and then critically assessed on the basis of its tendency to legitimate social inequality.

Meritocracy, also referred to as the "common-sense ideal", is a core assumption within a classical functionalist theoretical framework. Meritocratic accounts of education are not uncommon within industrialized capitalist economies. The ideals of meritocracy applied to education assume that the smartest and most deserving students will be the most successful in their education. These students will be more likely to continue on to university and enter high paying careers in the market place, than those who are less able. According to this framework, it is the best and brightest who will succeed in their education, and thus will be deserving of the most prestigious and highly paying occupations. Students who aspire and succeed academically are posited to do so meritocratically, on the basis of their personal talent and ability. Hence, they are deserving of their high-status occupations and economic rewards they are likely to accrue within a hierarchical structure (Oakes, 1985, Gaskell, 1992). Those who occupy the highest status positions and earn the highest income are purported also to be the ones who fulfil the high skill requirements of these positions, thus contributing the most to society (Gaskell, 1992; Oakes, 1992).

Implicit within this line of thought is the premise that individuals are evaluated on some universal criterion and that this criterion is universally accessible. Generally, it is assumed that individuals earn status, power, and wealth on the basis of ability and personal accomplishment and thus deserve to occupy the positions they come to occupy in the social class hierarchy (Gaskell, 1992; Oakes, 1985, 1992). As Kahl (1993) states regarding the functional theoretical framework,

> The vitality of our materialistic and competitive culture requires a reasonably close relationship between [the] causes and consequences of occupational roles. People must *believe* that on average, fair rules apply, so that those who have high skill and use discipline to train their skill will be rewarded with important jobs that pay well, and that money can buy a style of life that is admired in the community. Without the construction and support of such a chain of connections motivation would suffer and legitimacy within the community would ultimately be weakened (p. 48).

The functionalist claim that varying positions within industrial capitalism are universally accessible is, however, highly suspect given that social circumstances are assumed to play an important role in determining that shape individual opportunity (Oakes, 1985, Porter, 1982).

The hierarchical and unequal distribution of economic resources in class based societies is supported, moreover by institutions that promote such functional accounts of social reality. The classical functionalist portrayal of a meritocratic occupational and educational system has received due criticism (Bourdieu, 1977; 1990; 1996; Gaskell, 1992; Harker,1984; Oakes, 1985), and it can be concluded that the functionalist position, including the meritocratic claims regarding the educational institution can be considered ideological. The differential successes, failures and aspirations of students are justified by egalitarian (meritocratic) ideology (Gaskell, 1992; Kahl & Gilbert, 1993, Oakes, 1985), instead of being recognized as the function of their social inequality. Hence, the main function of meritocratic ideology is to promote the acceptance of the inequality so important in the maintenance of industrial capitalism (Kahl & Gilbert, 1993).

If one extends the functionalist account of the educational and occupational structure in an extreme manner, it is difficult to ignore the basic similarity this theoretical position shares with another theory present in the late nineteenth century: specifically, the social derivative of the theory of evolution- Social Darwinism. This theory concurs with the functionalist theoretical account of the educational system in that it argued that the individual had "achieved his [sic.] position because he[sic.] was the most fit" (Rosen et.al, 1969, p.5). Though the similarity between the aforementioned theoretical perspectives is not extensive, it is worth noting that there has been a disturbing tendency in recent years to attribute an individual's social circumstances completely to his or her personal capability, effort, or fitness for certain tasks.

A reflection of the contemporary emphasis upon psychological variables as causally related to the social circumstances of the individual is evident in Herrnstein and Murray's *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life.* Briefly, this study posits that individual intelligence is causally linked to poverty, unemployment, welfare dependency and crime. The main supposition of their text is that economic and educational inequality should be accepted as a natural state of affairs in a complex society where everyone "has their place" (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994). According to Herrnstein and Murray, social positions are contingent primarily upon innate intelligence and ability. The implications of this for social welfare or educational programs in industrialized societies like Canada and the United States is profound. If " success and failure in the…economy, and all that goes with it, are increasingly a matter of the genes that people inherit" (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994, p.5), social factors that determine individual circumstances are not accounted for. Herrnstein and Murray's narrow emphasis upon individual intelligence as the justifiable source of social inequality suggests that the role of education should simply be to acculturate us to the justified inequality (Kincheloe et al. , 1996, p. 42) present in our world (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994).

Though not as extreme a case as the previous example, the resurgence of human capital theory in relation to education and the occupational structure is also an example of the increased emphasis upon individual responsibility in regard to educational and occupational ambition and attainment. Thus, the common tendency of youth to seek education for the purpose of becoming a marketable asset in the labour market is a reflection of the rebirth of human capital theory in the current social context. According to this theoretical orientation, those who invest time and money in their education will be rewarded financially by employers. Human beings become social resources to be cultivated for the purposes of economic gain. Hence, differences in economic conditions between individuals are posited as differences in individual investment in human capital, and not the result of social inequalities already present between individuals (Abercrombie et.al, 1994).

The research of Krahn and Lowe (1988, 1997) is relevant to the discussion of human capital theory and contemporary education. These researchers have gathered survey data through longitudinal studies involving high school students. Much of their work focuses upon the effects of unemployment, and the transition from formal schooling into the labour market. The research of interest involves a longitudinal study of high school and university students who were beginning the transition from school to work during the mid- eighties. A key design feature of the project was to compare the experiences of students from three different cities: Edmonton, Toronto, and Sudbury. Interviews and surveys were conducted periodically over a seven year time frame involving the same group of students, carefully documenting the experiences and difficulties these individuals encountered in their transitional experience (Ashton & Lowe, 1991; Krahn & Lowe, 1988).

Krahn and Lowe explored the patterns of educational and labour market attitudes exhibited by the cohort of youth who began the transition process during the mid-eighties. One of their intriguing findings was that most of both the high school and the university students firmly believed in the importance of education to their future occupational success. The positive evaluation of a large majority of students toward the educational system, despite the unemployment and growing under employment characteristic of this time period, presents a contradiction. Though sample members questioned the relevance of education to work, as well as the contribution their education made to their "marketability" in the labour force, the majority expressed a desire to continue their education, even in the face of uncertainties. Further, recent follow -up studies have confirmed the presence of tremendous faith in the educational system is still apparent in the current context (1997).

Although these results appear counter intuitive, the researchers point out that a strong commitment to education, and to higher education in particular, is widely prevalent in North America. The fact that education does not guarantee a job does not seem to deter Canadian youth from seeking further education to secure employment. These findings strongly suggest that young Canadians are "committed to the belief that higher education is the ticket to career success" (Ashton and Lowe, 1991, p. 137). These findings indicate, too, that human capital theory and meritocratic notions of individual investment and reward were pervasive during the mid - eighties, just as they are in the contemporary context.

Other important findings from this research indicated that labour market entry has become exceedingly difficult for contemporary youth. Importantly, these youth were not extremely "choosy" about the type of employment in which they hoped to engage, nor did they reject the possibility of learning new technology in order to improve their labour force marketability. Due to the growth of the service sector and part- time employment and the lack of government sponsored employment programs, the trestle between the student-worker gap has widened. Hence, it is increasingly difficult for youth to "make their way" in the world, and cross the threshold into independence and adulthood (Ashton & Lowe, 1991; Krahn & Lowe, 1988).

The Krahn and Lowe research does not focus specifically upon social class differences in educational and occupational plans. However, their study does lend support to the notion of different educational goals between individuals who have differential access to varying material resources. Specifically, though no gender differences were evident in plans to continue education, for either the university or high school samples, social class differences were found in this regard. As Krahn and Lowe (1991) confirm,

> Socioeconomic background does have an effect. In both the high school and university samples, those with parents who had attended university were significantly more likely to plan additional schooling (p.135).

As noted earlier, the contemporary resurgence of human capital theory in the educational realm poses specific problems for disadvantaged youth. Specifically, human capital is based upon the market model which assumes that people compete in free markets and that more valuable individuals invest in their education, eventually earning higher salaries in the labour force (Rosenbaum et al, 1990). The social disadvantages that discourage economically deprived youth from investing in their education are not recognized assuming this theoretical orientation. Hence, the resurgence of human capital is cause for concern. The individualistic ideals that form the basis of the framework tend to "blame the victim" of poverty for their "lot in life" (Kahl, 1993), instead of demanding that government institutions guarantee the well being of the economically disadvantaged.

Susan Empson-Warner (1989) utilized the information collected from a portion of the Krahn and Lowe study to derive further conclusions from their data set. Specifically, she focused upon the Edmonton sample of high school students experiencing the school-labour market transition (sample members consisted of students from six Edmonton high schools). Warner predicted that initial negative experiences in the labour market would cause students to alter their occupational goals. The data support that this prediction; however, the expected negative influence of social class (via the higher probability of unemployment within the lower classes) was not found. This finding is an anomaly and must be contextualized. Specifically, in periods of economic extremes, labour market factors seem to take precedence over socio-economic ones. As Empson-Warner (1989) states,

> Recessions may [alter] previously established relationships because they represent an extreme set of circumstances. When unemployment levels are very high the experience of unemployment is more likely to affect people at all levels of the class structure (p. 111).

In addition, Empson-Warner points out that although aspirations were high for all groups of youth in the sample, and all were equally likely to experience unemployment, it must be noted that students from lower social classes began with lower goals than their more privileged counterparts (Empson- Warner, 1989). Also important to qualify is that many contemporary youth are leaving high school with unrealistically high aspirations and thus experience disappointment when they enter the labour force. The fact that these students are (were) unrealistic in their goal-setting demonstrates that many contemporary youth "are being socialized to accept the belief in equality of opportunity" (Empson-Warner, 1989, p. 111). Hence, meritocratic, individualistic explanations for both educational and occupational success are prevalent at the high school level (Empson-Warner, 1989).

A SHIFT AWAY FROM PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPLANTIONS FOR PERSONAL AMBITION AND ACHIEVEMENT

Given the contemporary emphasis upon individual traits as the determinants of educational and occupational goals, it is now necessary to explore the function of contemporary education from a more critical orientation. From an analytical perspective, schooling can be viewed as preparation for a career in an industrial capitalist labour market. Specifically, the educational institution sorts and slots school children into various roles through their schooling experience and encourages their acceptance of these roles. This sorting and slotting occurs through processes such as evaluation that result in test scores and school grades. Thus, the school system functions in a dual manner, in this regard, through selection and socialization. First, the school allocates a student into the appropriate program, and secondly, the school socializes the student to accept certain occupational goals. Thus, in accordance with this argument, individuals must aspire to educational and occupational goals that will prepare them most effectively for their role in the labour market (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Gaskell, 1992; Oakes, 1985).

As Bowles and Gintis (1976) posit, the reproduction of social classes through the schooling experience is a likely outcome. These theorists portray schools as reproductive agents of the inequalities present within the economy. Bowles and Gintis focus a great deal of attention upon how the school reinforces social class differences within the confines of the classroom. They propose the "correspondence model", positing that there is a close correspondence between the social relationships that govern personal interaction in the workplace and the social relationships present within the educational system. Basically, the separation of students into different ability groups (tracking) serves to fragment and stratify students along class lines, preparing them for the division of labour present in society. The differences across the different programs are said to prepare students from different social classes for their likely experience within the occupational structure. For example, the lack of personal closeness present within many working-class classroom environments serves to alienate students and encourage conformity. In contrast, the high degree of personal attention and group interaction present within middle and upper-class classroom environments prepares students for less alienating, more personally satisfying work (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Oakes, 1985).

The assumptions present within the correspondence model can be extended to complement the segmented labour market theory of the division of labour (Rosenbaum, 1990). This theory contends that the labour market consists of two basic components: specifically, the primary and secondary labour markets. Firstly, a primary labour market exists, which offers high wages, good working conditions, job security, and advancement opportunities. The secondary labour market lacks the benefits and features of the primary labour market, and does not reward workers' skills. Hence, the skills and training of employees do not lead to better jobs or wages (Rosenbaum et al, 1990). This theory contends that the segmented nature of the labour market helps employers control workers and perpetuates a system of credentialism and inequality (Rosenbaum et al, 1990). It has also been suggested that social reproduction occurs in organizations to carefully guard power and privilege for those who fit in and for those the powerful see as their kind. Rosenbaum et al (1990) proceed to cite Collins (1979) who

> discusses the use of credentials and social background to ensure "normative control" in the organization. These notions suggest that the real goal served by a segmented labour market is not to find individuals with better skills, but rather to keep social advancement in the hands of those who have such power (p. 266).

The notion of the "segmented educational market" presented by Bowles and Gintis can be seen to complement the notion of the segmented labour market (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Rosenbaum et al, 1990). It is conceivable that high school students are prepared to enter a segmented labour market through their schooling experience (Bowles & Gintis, 1976).

Though the correspondence model is structurally deterministic, Bowles and Gintis recognize the material inequalities present between students that are missing from the less critical account of the school system (Little, 1995;Morrow & Torres, 1994; Oakes, 1985, 1992). The emphasis upon individual motivation and talent present within the functional account of education is deceiving. Basically, the functional framework posits that the aspirations and life successes of the individual are to be explained at the psychological level, hence the subjectivity of the actor is used to explain the goals of a student. Taylor (1978) criticizes wholly psychological explanations of personal ambition, arguing that

> a model which attempts to explain either educational or occupational ambition primarily in terms of a "personality disposition" such as motivation, drive, assiduity, etc. erroneously overlooks the significant contribution of what Crockett (1962) refers to as the more variable contingencies arising from the social system (p.44).

By explaining achievement and ambition at the level of individual psyche (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994), social influences are entirely neglected (Kincheloe et al, 1996). Rather than focusing on talent as the primary determinant of academic performance and ambition, it can be argued that students are sorted and slotted in school to accommodate a highly stratified labour market of unequal rewards. This separation and categorization of students is often accepted as a result of the individualistic explanations like the ones noted in the previous sections. Given the extreme emphasis upon individual responsibility in our culture, it is pertinent to recognize that educational sorting and slotting does not occur completely as a result of psychological contingencies such as personal talent or ability (Kincheloe et al, 1996). The functionalist account of a meritocratic educational system, which appropriates the psychological explanation fails to explain why students who achieve less in school are disproportionately from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds (Gaskell, 1992; Kincheloe et al, 1996; Oakes, 1985).

An extensive body of literature also documents the impact that social class background has, not only upon school achievement, but upon life goals. Researchers in the United States, Canada, and Europe (Bourdieu) have found consistently that the social class background of (high school) students is a significant determinant of their educational goals(Bellamy, 1994; Bourdieu,1985, 1990, 1996; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Gaskell, 1992; Harker, 1984; Kahl, 1953; Kahl & Gilbert, 1993; McClelland, 1990; Maxwell & Maxwell, 1994, 1995; Oakes, 1985; Porter, 1965; Porter, Porter & Blishen, 1982; Taylor, 1978).

Assuming that social relations are determined first and foremost by individuals material conditions of life (Marx in Bottomore, 1956), it follows that the socialization process which varies by social class background, influences a student's academic self-concept, academic performance, and educational goals. The contention that self-confidence is an important factor in achieving academic success is supported by Van Stone, Nelson & Niemann's (1994) study of the primary sociological and psychological belief factors that were self reported to influence the success of economically disadvantaged students. Though the subjects were a small sample of students, there is reason to believe that these findings are applicable beyond the specific sample. Van Stone et al. found that "participants mentioned the importance of accepting responsibility for their performance on academic assignments, including setting goals and having the confidence to meet those goals" (Van Stone et al., 1994, p. 579). The relationship between academic achievement and academic self-concept is also confirmed by Marsh and Yeung's (1998) study of self- concept, academic achievement, and course selection. Specifically, the results of this investigation were largely consistent with previous longitudinal studies of the causal ordering of academic self-concept and achievement (Marsh & Yeung, 1998). The results of a path analysis conducted by these researchers showed a significant relationship between academic self- concept and academic achievement (Marsh & Yeung, 1998).

The perspective that the school rewards the values of the economically and socially advantaged classes of society is also adopted for this study (Bourdieu, 1990; 1996; McClelland, 1990). Hence, the link between confidence, school performance, and goals is a logical one. Individuals who are prepared to engage in school activities will experience personal competency in the academic realm and will not be hesitant to set high personal expectations and aspirations (Bourdieu, 1990; McClelland, 1990). It is worthy of mention that middle and upper-class youth may experience high academic achievement and perceive academic competency more often than disadvantaged youth because of the compatibility of their early socialization with the values present in the school. In Marxian terms,

> the class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that in consequence the

> ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are, in general subject to it (Marx in Bottomore, 1956, p.78).

Thus, if student achievement is measured by the standards of the middle and upper-classes at the expense of others, it is consistent that economically-privileged youth will find that schooling conforms to previous socialization and expectations, giving them an advantage over others (Gaskell, 1992; Oakes, 1985; Taylor, 1978).

Differences in economic condition (class differences) lead to inequalities in social relationships, as experienced in social institutions such as the school. The confidence with which students engage in their education will likely influence the aspirations they develop as a result of their experience. Specifically, high goals are likely to be a product of school success. One study that supports the claim that school achievement is positively correlated with lofty goals can be found in Taylor's 1978 dissertation titled "Social Factors and the Ambition of Youth". In his dissertation Taylor develops a causal model for the educational and occupational ambitions of youth. It was found through the course of this research that one of the determinants of the value students attach to higher level educational and occupational achievements is school success. Along with social class, parental encouragement, and achievement disposition, school success, measured by grades achieved, was found to have an independent effect on higher- level goal-setting. Taylor (1978) found that

> the importance students assign to intellectual development expression and self actualization is ...likely to be influenced by their past and present performance in activities that closely relate to these types of achievement (p.391).

Children from disadvantaged homes may not view school activities or school success as personally relevant or attainable as a result of difficult circumstances within their homes. In contrast, middle-class children will more than likely have the opportunity and the desire to contemplate school success as a result of the financial resources, time and encouragement available from their families. For those individuals who come to the school with a set of values that does not match the dominant system of values present within the institution, schooling can become a process of discovering incompatibility and thus result in a low self- concept and low personal expectations (Bourdieu, 1990; Taylor, 1978).

This perspective does not posit that children from economically disadvantaged homes can not or will not aspire to achieve lofty goals (see Kahl, 1993). However, though exceptions to the general trend are apparent under rare circumstances, it is essential to recognize that individuals are measured by the standards of the middle and upper-classes, whose values and lifestyle are rewarded within the school. Hence, the chances of middle and upper-class youth experiencing familiarity and competency in the classroom and thus developing high-status aspirations is far greater than it is for students from economically deprived backgrounds (Bourdieu, 1996; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; McClelland, 1990).

It is therefore probable that the objective condition of poverty makes subjective experiences within the school uncomfortable and thus shapes an individual's perception of what goals are considered personally possible. As Porter suggests, " aspirations are the motivational prerequisites for filling a complex structure of adult roles, particularly those of the work world" (Porter, 1965, p. 26,). Assuming this to be the case, it is necessary to consider the proposition that students are prepared and encouraged to engage in a process of economic and social reproduction through the schooling experience (Bourdieu, 1996). Because middle-class values and lifestyle are rewarded through schooling, it is likely that students from less privileged backgrounds are less likely to achieve or aspire to higher level academic goals (Bourdieu, 1990, 1996; Maxwell & Maxwell,1994, 1995; Oakes, 1985; Riordon, 1985). Also, when individual characteristics such as personal ambition and personality are used to explain achievement and aspirations, important social determinants are neglected. This obscures the difficult economic circumstances that constrain the goal-setting of many individuals.

Rather than being assumed to be a neutral playing field, school must be considered a game that some are more equipped to play than others. The winners and the losers are not determined by some objective and neutral, equally accessible criterion, but by the degree of familiarity of the players with the game (Bourdieu, 1990; 1996; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Thus, the functionalist notion of the educational system must be rejected. Since egalitarian ideology holds that individuals should be able to move through the hierarchy of skill classes according to their inclinations and abilities" (Porter, 1982, p. 166), non-critical, meritocratic ideology tends to justify a stratified social system as "common-sense". It is the naïve, meritocratically-driven conception of the "American dream" that has fostered the illusion that education is equally available to all and careers are truly open to the talented (Porter, Porter & Blishen, 1965). Such uncompromising individualism contributes to the justification of a social system that maintains a high degree of economic and social inequality while presenting a façade of neutrality (Oakes, 1985).

BOURDIEU'S THEORY OF PRACTICE: HOW SOCIAL CLASS IMPACTS EDUCATIONAL GOAL-SETTING

Rather than conceive of an individuals' educational goals and achievements as solely determined by their personal ability it is essential to determine which factors (variables) interact to produce different aspirations among students. The formation of goals is of particular interest in this study simply because, to eventually possess something concrete, one must first desire it (Porter, Porter & Blishen, 1982).

Social class background determines individual agency to the extent that ambition and aspiration are formed as a result of a relationship with the material environment (Bourdieu, 1990; Little, 1995; Oakes, 1985, 1992; Porter, 1965). Individuals impacted by an environment of material deprivation are likely to possess different goals than those whose environment has been economically abundant. Thus, in the study reported here, it will not be of concern to measure only the actual educational achievement of individuals but to determine what influences individuals to aspire to various educational goals (Bourdieu, 1990; Porter, 1965 Porter & Blishen, 1982).

The material conditions of the students are indicated by the social class background of the family (in this case the parent's or guardian's occupation) from which they receive their primary socialization (Taylor, 1978). For though there can never be a perfect, linear relationship between social class background and the aspirations of the young, economic status proceeds most other variables in its effects upon life chances and choices (Bourdieu, 1990; 1996).

The connection between social class background and aspirations is complex and should be thought about in a relational manner: specifically, the relationship between individual agency in striving towards certain goals and the structural constraints of poverty; between the active choice of the students and the limitations imposed by economic condition. In this respect, the ideas of Pierre Bourdieu (1990,1993,1996) are helpful in conceptualizing how agency is constrained by social structural mechanisms. Hence, Bourdieu's general theoretical framework will be outlined and his conceptual formulation of "habitus" will be described in more detail in regards to economic constraints and aspirations of the young.

Bourdieu's "theory of practice" attempts to reconcile the historical debate concerning the individual in relation to society. Instead of positing an extreme interpretive or structural position, he recognizes that every individual has agency within the confines of certain structures. His theory articulates how mechanistic structures impact individual agency and influence the social experiences of an individual. Specifically, Bourdieu posits that social reality exists both inside of and outside of the agent, in our minds and in things (Swartz, 1997). Through his theoretical construction of habitus and conceptualizations of social and cultural capital, Bourdieu is able to reconcile between the two opposing theoretical orientations in social science (Bourdieu, 1985, 1990, 1993, 1996, 1998).

Importantly, Bourdieu's theory of practice avoids the two polarities in social theorizing, specifically, the strong structuralist and the wholly interpretive schools of thought. A purely structural perspective posits that individuals are completely determined by structural forces. For example, a materialist perspective asserts that the opportunities of agents are completely determined by the material base in a society. Specifically, the owners of the means of production exploit workers who are forced to commodify their labour as a means of survival. Strong structuralism such as this contributes to a grand theory of social reproduction and the role of societal institutions in the perpetuation of social inequality. This is a positive alternative to the organic functionalism discussed earlier in which social institutions are posited as neutral and meritocratic. However one difficulty with a structural explanation is its lack of a theory of agency (Little, 1995;Morrow & Torres, 1994). Theories that posit that agents are completely determined by external forces cannot explain exceptional instances of individual resistance and social transformation that occur in society (Gaskell, 1992; Little, 1991;Morrow & Torres&Torres, 1995).

The contraposition of a strong structural explanation is a purely interpretive one. Bourdieu also manages to avoid the shortcomings associated with this theoretical orientation. Interpretive accounts posit that social reality is a product of social interpretation at a given instant in history. The primary concern within this school of thought is the time- space and culture-bound nature of human knowledge. A strong version of post- modernism illustrates one possible interpretive and completely subjective account of social reality. The grand meta- narratives of progress and emancipation are perceived as forms of violence that include some social actors but exclude others (Howe, 1998; Butler, 1995). Specifically, most accounts or claims are dismissed because of the impossibility of accounting for the subjective state of all actors. Therefore, events are left to individual or subjective interpretation. The main weakness of a completely interpretive account of reality is its relativistic and contradictory character. As Howe (1998) states,

> If all knowledge claims are thoroughly context bound and are *merely* masks for interests and power, are not postmodernists who might advance themselves also possessed of these features? Is not knowledge then an illusion? And are not radical relativism, nihilism, and moral and political paralysis unavoidable (p.14)?

More important, the relativistic account of social reality completely ignores the structural forces that have an impact on actors, and thus relinquishes social criticism or reform derived from the analysis of structures (Howe, 1998).

Swartz (1997) contends that Bourdieu's theory of practice

> does not oppose the subjective nature of the individual and the structures in society as two separate forms of being- one external to the other; but constructs them relationally as if they were two dimensions of the same social reality (p. 96).

Bourdieu urges an escape from the realism of the structure, to which objectivism leads, as it treats relations as realities already constituted outside of the history of the group. But Bourdieu argues that it is also necessary to refrain from pure subjectivism "which is quite incapable of giving an account of the necessity of the social world" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 52). Hence, the reconciliation of the two extreme theoretical orientations is evident (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Swartz, 1997).

Bourdieu presents the nature of the life-world through a construct he names "habitus". Because Bourdieu uses this construct to explain the position an individual represents within the social class hierarchy, it is useful for the purposes of exploring economic and social inequality in relation to the aspirations of youth. The concept can be broadly defined as " a system of durable, transposable dispositions… that generate and organize practices which can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends" (Bourdieu, 1990). Thus, habitus suggests an adaptation to conditions enacted through dispositions, or a "way of being" in life (Bourdieu, 1990; Bellamy, 1994). In this case habitus serves as a powerful conceptual tool used to demonstrate how differences in life goals are ultimately a reflection of agency constrained by structure. Basically, Bourdieu's theory is congruent with the notion that social relations, mediated through the habitus, including life chances and choices are largely influenced by economic conditions of existence. Consistent with this definition is the notion that members of different social classes will have different habituses, and that these dispositions and values (habitus) connected with class will be a significant factor in determining the life chances and aspirations of the young (Bourdieu, 1990; 1993; 1996). At this point it is important to explain how the concept of habitus will be used as a conceptual tool in this study. Specifically, habitus will be understood as dispositions resulting from primary socialization in certain economic circumstances that have an influence on students' educational goal-setting. Habitus associated with a disadvantaged social class background is posited to create a salient incompatibility between the student's personal experience with what is expected in school. This experience of incompatibility is thought to influence students' perceptions of their future possibilities and choices. (Bourdieu, 1985; 1990).

It is conceivable that economically disadvantaged youth may experience discomfort with or unpreparedness for school related tasks and thus fall short of the academic standards of the classroom. This notion of discrepancy, better expressed as "unpreparedness", has much to do with the incongruence between the child's experience at home and that within the school. Central to Bourdieu's theory is the notion of varying habitus. Specifically, he describes individuals as inhabitants of different worlds of practices. Consistent with this assumption is the notion of varying universes of meaning corresponding to these different worlds of practices (Bourdieu, 1990). In his theory differences in habitus imply that the habituses of different social classes will be valued differently. This is a helpful way to connect the concept of habitus with the notion of social inequality and social reproduction in the educational sphere (Bourdieu, 1990; Harker, Mahar Wilkes, 1990).

The leading assumption within much of Bourdieu's work is that social institutions encompass and reward the lifestyle of the dominant group. The economically and socially powerful members within a particular historical social context define what is generally valued, including knowledge, skills, attitudes and behavior. Thus, it is the habitus of the dominant group that is rewarded within social institutions such as schools (Bellamy, 1994). Therefore, to attain social and economic rewards within a particular social system, one must conform to the structures that reaffirm dominant group habitus (Bourdieu, 1990; 1996). It follows that some actors will reap the benefits from social institutions while others will suffer at the hands of the same structure. Bourdieu claims that objects of knowledge are constructed, and that habitus, which is constituted in practice is always oriented toward practical functions (Bourdieu, 1990, 1998). This highlights an important assumption within Bourdieu's work. Specifically, that it is the intentional nature of structures that value some agents and devalue others (Bourdieu, 1990).

In this sense, it is the universe of the dominant that becomes *universally* valued, taken for granted, and common sense. The practical function of social institutions such as the school is to continually legitimate the socially stratified nature of industrial societies. As Bourdieu (1996) states in regards to the unequal distribution of social power,

> when the business nobility compound all of [their]titles with the nobility of academic titles, [they] stand in the perfect position to impose a recognition of their own lifestyle and thus the misrecognized and recognized domination of [their] own norms of perception and appreciation in the personal relations market, where manners, taste, accent and deportment are negotiated, and where a person's social value is determined (p.314).

It can be argued that non-dominant groups are evaluated according to the criteria of the powerful because the dominant group has the leverage to define what is socially valued (Bourdieu, 1990; Bellamy, 1994; Swartz, 1997). The nature of structures such as educational institutions reflect dominant group habitus, and those whose group membership is compatible with the valued habitus will undoubtedly benefit from structures that affirm their identities. By wielding this power over the definition of the socially desirable it is likely that the reproduction of structures reflecting the socially valued will occur (Bellamy, 1994; Bourdieu,1990; Swartz, 1997).

The way in which Bourdieu explains the concept of habitus highlights the relationship between constraining structures and the agency of the individual in relation to social reproduction. Bourdieu (1996) reflects upon the dual nature of habitus in his account of the French school system. In this work he describes habitus as

> social positions embodied in bodily dispositions [that] contribute to determining whether bodies[corps] come together or stay apart by inscribing between two bodies the attractions or repulsions that correspond to the relationship between two positions of which they are the embodiment (p. 183).

In this excerpt Bourdieu describes how different habituses (lifestyles creating certain dispositions, values) differentiate, aggregate and segregate individuals based upon class position. It is clear that the concept of habitus does not produce a completely structural deterministic explanation of how institutions such as the school accept or reject individuals based upon social class background. The bodily dispositions Bourdieu speaks of imply that the actor is implicated in the reproduction process insofar as the agent is acting out a set of dispositions. Ultimately, it is the set of dispositions and values that the agent's actions reflect that make it likely that he/she will reproduce his/her class position (Bourdieu, 1996).

Thus, social reproduction seems to be the result of the incompatibility of non-dominant group habitus with that which is rewarded within social structures (Bourdieu, 1996). Importantly, the actors' participation in the reproductive process implies that "he [sic.] is an active presence in the world through which the world imposes its presence" (Bourdieu, 1990,p. 52). The existence of an active identity is affirmed. While many purely structural theories posit that the nature of individual action is constructed outside of the individual, Bourdieu's theory does not share this rigidity. To do so would be to deny the possibilities of individual actors. However, as discussed in the previous section, Bourdieu does not ignore the structural aspect of group segregation. Habitus is an embodiment of dispositions that are learned and practiced by individuals and groups. Individual agents act out their *learned* habitus. Much of what they learn Bourdieu attributes to early socialization and it is clear that structural constraints do impose their presence upon the individual agent (Bourdieu, 1990). Objective, segregated structures determine the rewards and punishments individuals receive for their habitus, at an institutional level. However, Bourdieu describes a system in which individuals constantly perpetuate and thus reproduce themselves into the future as a result of their histories (socialization). It is as if an internal law is constantly reactivated through which the law of external necessities is constantly exerted (Bourdieu, 1990).

If we apply the concept of varying habitus to formal schooling, the acceptance and promotion of middle-class values within the home seem likely to give students from these homes an advantage within an institution that promotes the same values. Therefore, parental encouragement, support, and connections which refine these values (later discussed as cultural and social capital) are of some importance in attaining school confidence, success and aspiration to certain goals, and it is likely that these "facilitating resources" (Taylor, 1978) increase with economic resources available to the family. The notion of facilitating resources is similar to Bourdieu's concepts of social and cultural capital enacted within certain "fields of power" (Bourdieu, 1996).

Swartz (1996) describes Bourdieu's notion of fields of power as the social settings in which habitus operates. Fields can denote structured spaces that are organized around certain types of capital or combinations of capital. Thus, these fields contribute to the more structural dimension of Bourdieu's theory and denote the setting in which power is negotiated within institutions such as the school. As Swartz asserts, fields are conceptual constructions based upon relationality (Bourdieu, 1990; Swartz, 1997) not rigid structures that wholly determine individual action.

Bourdieu's relational conception of *fields* is demonstrated by examining the various properties of fields. In general, fields are described as structural spaces of dominant and subordinate positions based upon amounts and types of capital. Specifically, cultural and social capital enhance or demean an actor's position within a given field. It is important to distinguish the two forms of capital. Cultural capital can be conceptualized as familiarity with "high" culture, whereas social capital involves notions of social networks and connections (Bellamy, 1994; Bourdieu, 1990, 1993).

Cultural capital includes knowledge from previous socialization that assists in the comprehension of linguistic patterns, behavioral familiarity, and conformity or comfort within a particular social context. In essence, cultural capital contributes to the individual's ability to receive and decode information in a particular context (Bellamy, 1994). It is extremely important to note that in a field such as the school, methods of receiving and decoding cultural capital are not taught, however, evaluation is based on such "invisible tokens" (Swartz, 1996). Students who have acquired the necessary cultural capital through prior socialization will likely excel and aspire academically. Thus, the invisible concept of cultural capital becomes objectified in the form of credentials and qualifications. Hence, academic capital is converted into economic capital and it is assumed a reflection of talent, not an accumulation of capital. Bourdieu argues convincingly that cultural capital is a key mechanism in the replication of the dominant culture and that inequalities in wealth are converted into educational inequalities contributing to the intergenerational reproduction of social status (Bellamy, 1994; Bourdieu, 1990, 1996; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977).

Social capital is a second notable concept to consider when discussing inequality within certain contexts. Social capital is defined as "the aggregate of actual or potential resources which are linked to the possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of acquaintances and recognition" (Bellamy, 1994, p. 123). This definition suggests that connections are significant in forging networks with highly established members of the dominant group. The amount of social capital an individual has is contingent upon two factors: the number of connections that person can mobilize, and the amount of social, cultural and economic capital those individual connections provide (Bourdieu, 1990).

Coleman (1988 as cited in Bellamy 1994) posits that social capital can exist in three forms: as obligations and expectations, as information channels, and as social norms. Obligations include "paybacks" or favors that those in powerful positions can "collect" when the need or opportunity arises. Information channels are the second form of social capital. Individuals are able to "keep on top" of things if they are connected to those who are knowledgeable about current events. Bellamy (1994) uses the example of a high school student receiving information about post-secondary education. The transition from high school is made easier if parents or friends of the family pass along information and encouragement to the prospective college student. Information about the worth of academic credentials is also incentive for students to invest time in furthering their education. Norms and sanctions present within the community support academic achievement and thus justify dominant group striving. Importantly, the schools' role is facilitated by community support. Finally, social capital takes the form of string pulling or connections to the "old boy" network. The children of dominant group members often benefit from the favors of their parent's friends and associates (Bellamy, 1994; Bourdieu, 1996).

There is evidence to support the idea that higher goals are set when greater parental support and "facilitating resources" are present. Taylor's (1978) study of social factors and the aspirations of youth strongly supports this position. The results of his study demonstrated that one of the main variables found to have independent effects upon a child's likelihood of aspiring to lofty goals was parental support. The model developed in this research connects this type of parental ambition and concern with their social class position. Specifically, upper middle-class parents are more likely to display concern and ambition as to the educational performance of their child. The model presented in Taylor's thesis assumes that

> parents' concern for the future achievements/ambition of their child is influenced by their social class position. Further, this concern is expressed early in the child's life, both directly through socialization and child rearing techniques and more directly through on-going verbal statements and symbolic gestures (e.g. praise, rewards, admonishment) that explicitly convey to the child their standards, expectations and aspirations regarding his/her performance and achievement in contexts such as formal schooling (Taylor, 1978, p.393).

Parental support is also cited as a main determinant upon the academic achievement and aspirations of youth in Looker's (1994) research. Looker collected data from two surveys, (1975 and 1989) of youths and their parents, investigating the future plans of these youth and the factors that affected their goals. One of the most important findings of this research was that a large percentage of youths in all of the sample settings reported that both parents had the most important influence on their educational decisions. Interestingly, teachers, school counselors, and friends were not found to be as important as parents in the formation of these decisions. In her study, Looker labels parents who took an active role regarding their child's education as a form of "active capital" (Looker, 1994) that benefits the child. Specifically, she identified the specific influences that impact how active parents' are regarding their teenage child's education. Parents with a higher level of education reported more contacts with their child's teachers and counselors. Furthermore, parents who have attended post-secondary education are also more likely to feel comfortable helping senior students with difficult assignments. These "active" parents will likely be familiar with the entrance requirements and application procedures of universities and assist their child with these procedures. Parental preference regarding ambition for their children was also found to influence the aspirations of the teens surveyed. The findings consistently indicated a strong relationship between what parents say they want and expect for youth and what youth themselves want and expect. Further, these high parental expectations are translated into action by maintaining a high degree of contact with the school. Finally, parental encouragement was found to be an important factor in the aspirations of the youth studied. Encouragement and support refers not only to financial assistance but to moral support, and an emphasis upon the importance of education. Bourdieu would refer to this emphasis upon the primacy of education as the encouragement of certain dispositions (Looker, 1994), namely those congruent with social institutions that reflect dominant group values (Bourdieu &

Passeron, 1977). Thus, it is of great importance for parents to have certain academic expectations for the child and encourage him/her in his studies in order for the child to feel prepared and comfortable in the school context. Thus, the social capital present in the family, as a direct result of economic position, is objectified within the school and influences both the success and goals of the student (Bourdieu, 1990).

The concept of habitus is also used in this review to convey a certain limitation placed upon subjective perception concerning the attainability of certain goals and ambitions. Again, the financial resources of the family are of primary importance in relation to goal formation. If the primary concern of a family is to provide for basic needs, it follows that the parents of poorer children may not have either the time to spend time assisting their child with school work or the money to spend on educational resources. If young persons are exposed throughout their youth to economic deprivation and the primary goal is to sustain basic needs, this disposition may become enduring. Hence, socialization and immersion in an environment in which the primary goal is to sustain life leaves little time for the development of an interest in school. If one's economic situation leads one to experience school related activities as a distant and secondary to sustaining basic needs, individual subjectivity is undoubtedly shaped by exposure to these conditions of life (Bourdieu, 1990; Taylor, 1978). As Taylor quotes Banks (1976, p.75),

> there is obviously a close relationship between material deprivation and the whole way of life of the family. Poverty can make a parent less willing to keep a child at school; can make it difficult for him to afford books and toys, or expeditions which help a child to learn; can enforce housing conditions which make the whole family strained and unhappy or make it almost impossible for parents and child to talk or play together. Moreover, even when these conditions are no longer present, the fact that they have existed in the past or were a feature of the parents own

> childhood, may exert an influence on attitudes, values and aspiration for a generation or even more (Taylor, 1978, p.32).

Bourdieu's theoretical construct concurs with this line of thought. In fact he expresses lifestyle or habitus as so deeply affecting the subjectivity of the individual he employs strong psychological connotations to emphasize the process by which a lifestyle becomes *a part* of an individual. In fact, Bourdieu has gone so far as to name habitus the "cultural unconscious", "a set of deeply interiorized master patterns", and a "mental habit" (Swartz, 1997). Hence, the subjectivity of the individual is so heavily influenced by objective circumstance, actions are objectively regulated "without being the product of the organizing action of a conductor " (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977).

As social structures and circumstance impact upon the individual, they are likely to become the embodiment of their conditions of life. This resulting embodiment reaps different social consequences contingent upon compatibility with the dominant social system (Bourdieu, 1998; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). To unite concepts of objective structure and individual agency, it is helpful to think of a system of circular relations that unite structures and practices (Swartz, 1997). Objective structures tend to produce subjective dispositions that produce actions that, in turn tend to reproduce the objective structure (Bourdieu, 1990; 1996; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). Thus, the individual is the embodiment of the social and the actions of the individual in certain situations is largely the result of social position, not inherent nature (Bourdieu, 1990; Swartz, 1997).

SUPPORTING RESEARCH

The personal decision to aspire to certain goals and to make certain life choices is undoubtedly shaped by the economic constraints placed upon the subjective state. Material constraints can produce variations in the perception of what is personally attainable, what goals and ambitions are likely to be achieved. As Taylor (1978) states,

> the variable nature of the conditions of life associated with the different social classes (social opportunities, power & influence, social prestige, psychic gratification) some classes virtually take foregranted certain goals that others regard to be either personally impossible or highly problematic (p.7).

Hence, the "relative distance" (Kohn , 1959 as cited in Taylor, 1978) of attaining certain goals in life varies with economic constraint (Taylor, 1978).

At this point Taylor's proposed theoretical model is applicable to the discussion at hand. Specifically, he adopts a heuristic theoretical scheme that identifies and posits a relationship between the goals and ambitions present within different social classes and the value placed upon satisfying certain needs. Taylor uses Maslow's (1954) ascending hierarchy of ascending needs and parallels this hierarchy with different dimensions of success, to create a social psychological model of the goal-setting behavior of individuals. He posits that social class position (access to different material resources) influences the ability to meet certain needs and that therefore social classes will differ in their subjective perception of success at different levels of the hierarchy (Taylor, 1978). In other words, members of different social classes will conceive of success differently. As Taylor states,

> Since members of the lower classes are likely to be preoccupied with lower level needs, it comes as no surprise that they tend to conceive personal success in terms of tangible attainments such as money, financial security, and material possessions, referents that constitute the fulfillment of the lower level needs on Maslow's scheme. For the upper- middle-class on the other hand, the meanings

> accorded to personal success in life are more apt to reflect their capacity to transcend a preoccupation of basic needs fulfillment (Taylor, 1978, p.89).

The results of Taylor's research support other evidence that educational and occupational intentions are positively correlated with social class background, even when gender and grades are controlled. It is also important to note that, though only a small relationship was found between social class and the endorsement of the previously mentioned achievement dimensions, it is significant that the most notable social class differences were present for the achievement dimensions which were conceptualized as reflecting needs located at opposite ends of Maslow's needs hierarchy (Taylor, 1978). His data revealed

> a tendency for the valuation of financial security and pecuniary material affluence (achievement dimensions which constitute the gratification of lower level needs) to vary by social class in a negative monotonic direction. In contrast, the probability of attaching high value to personal autonomy, intellectual development-expression, and self actualization (achievement dimensions which symbolize the satisfaction of higher level needs) varies with students' social class background in a positive, monotonic direction (p.259).

Thus, this research supports the notion that individual subjectivity is contingent to a great degree upon material resources.

Other Canadian research that posits a relationship between aspirations and class position includes Jane Gaskell's (1992) work involving students at Canadian working-class high schools. Specifically, she interviewed students to gain insights into connections between gender, education and the labour market. Gaskell found that many of the young girls and men she interviewed were not interested in pursuing post-secondary education after the completion of high school. The females in the study consistently claimed that the vocational business courses in high school were preferable to academic classes because they offered the possibility of immediate employment after compulsory schooling. Industrial arts courses were preferred by most of the young males, since these courses would likely lead to vocational school or immediate employment. Due to economic constraints, these young people consistently chose education that would likely reproduce their parents social positions in relation to both class and gender (Gaskell, 1992).

Financial concerns consistently surfaced as main determinants of the choices made by many of the students in Gaskell's study. Specifically, many interviewees in the study did not have the money to pursue post-secondary education even if they so desired. Working and earning money to sustain themselves and their families became of utmost importance to these students. Importantly, it was also evident to Gaskell that the girls in her sample had been socialized to accept that their primary responsibility in adulthood would be carrying out domestic tasks such as raising children and maintaining the home. It is also intriguing to note that many males in the study viewed their role in the family as the traditional "bread winner," suggesting that rigid sex role expectations were also widely present within these lower income families (Gaskell, 1992). It is clear that structural constraints such as limited economic resources interacted with individual motivation (choice) to produce the life worlds of the students in this study (Gaskell, 1992; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Bourdieu, 1990; 1996). Hence, the overwhelming influence of financial constraint interacts with an active decision making process to reproduce structural inequality (Gaskell, 1992).

Gaskell's research also supports another of Bourdieu's concepts, which directly relates to the discussion of structural inequality within the school. Specifically, applying the concept of "soft domination" (Bourdieu, 1990) requires a more critical account of the educational field as a site of social reproduction. Soft domination also relates to the notion of differences in subjectivity as a result of social class. Bourdieu explores unequal relations of power between individuals within social institutions (fields) as modes of domination. Domination can be direct or subtle in nature; specifically, he discusses the exertion of power through direct and indirect measures. Direct domination involves the use of sanctions or physical violence to impose power and hierarchy. In this case ruling (dominant) groups need to negotiate little in order to maintain their status since their position is secured by the fear of the non-ruling groups . Direct domination is the most explicit and overt form of exercising power (Bourdieu, 1985; 1990; 1996). More subtle and covert mechanisms of control are necessary when direct domination is disapproved by a social system (Bourdieu, 1990). For instance, in a liberal democracy, methods of direct domination are a direct contradiction to the premises upon which the system is structured. Ideals of freedom and democratic rule must be upheld. However, power and hierarchy (and their abuse) do exist within theoretically democratic societies (Bourdieu, 1990; 1996). "Soft domination" is defined as the exertion of power through *compliance,* and in effect poses an alternative to direct forms of domination. Specifically, this form of dominance requires the powerful to maintain and uphold the ideals of society while maintaining a powerful position. The process through which soft domination is exercised is particularly intriguing and requires more subtle forms of manipulation than the overt use of force (Bourdieu, 1990, 1996; Swartz, 1997).

The dominant social classes are in an advantageous position to impose and legitimate their ideals within a given social system. However, since authority is derived from the system, dominant groups must *comply with it* to legitimate their position. Soft domination suggests a subtle imposition of values, rather than an overt intrusion by force. Thus,

> the wealthy [must] reckon with the collective judgement because they [derive] their authority from it…they also [have] to reckon with the official morality which requires them to make the greatest contributions to ceremonial exchanges, the maintenance of the poor…(Bourdieu, 1990, p. 128,).

It is possible that the most powerful groups may contribute the most to maintain the existing social structures. For it is within these structures that their vested interests lie (Bourdieu, 1990, 1993). Consistent with this idea, Bourdieu asserts that when power is not officially sanctioned to individuals or groups (ie. the wealthy), it is maintained through the overt compliance of the most powerful individuals with the values of the group. Thus, an active, visible conformity to social values is likely to be demonstrated by the dominant members of a society. This conformity ensures the constant reaffirmation and legitimation of social structures and it is within these institutions that dominant- class habitus is given its value. In this case, it is through the Durkhemian ideal of appeal to collective morality that power can be exercised and hierarchy maintained (Bourdieu, 1990). The power involved in soft domination is subtle, yet potentially more enduring than that exercised in direct oppression (Bourdieu, 1990).

It would stand to reason that resistance is likely (or quick) to surface in cases involving direct domination because of the negative conception of overt domination. The students in the Gaskell study did not face open coercion or a threat of force when they actively chose patterns that would reproduce their class and gender roles. On the contrary, they openly accepted their likely paths in life and did not aspire to higher goals than would be expected. Thus, it is possible that the majority of students in this study did not question the constraints of class (and gender) or aspire to higher goals because their disposition produced by previous socialization did not lead them to do so. They existed within a context of structures and relationships within these structures that influenced how they viewed themselves in relation to the world. In most cases either immediate low-salary employment or a domestic role was favored by these teens and the context of circumstance that helped shape their choices was not questioned but rather taken for granted as inevitable (Bourdieu, 1990; 1996; Gaskell, 1992).

Kahl's (1953) study of "common- man" boys also shares a certain affinity with the conceptual framework adopted by this thesis. Kahl investigated the aspirations of 24 working-class or "common man" boys whose fathers belonged to minor white collar, skilled and semi skilled occupational groups. By all standard measures, including I.Q. scores, these young men had the academic potential to pursue a college education. Kahl's study was designed to determine what influenced the boys either to aim for university education or to enter working-class occupations.

He found that the boys were divided in regard to their aspirations on the basis of parental support and the values they held toward education and schooling. He found that the attitudes of the boys were similar to those of their parents. His sample could be divided into two distinct groups on the basis of whether they were "satisfied with their lot in life", or whether they felt they could "get ahead". Interestingly, both groups saw education as a neutral and standard institution that sorts and slots students according to their ability. In fact, the main difference between students whose aspirations ran counter to their class background and those who accepted it was initial school success. This study therefore supports Taylor's and Looker's research in that parental support and school success have a substantial impact upon aspirations.

However, the fact that the subjects in Kahl's (1953) study were working-class boys is interesting. Obviously, an acceptance of the school and middle-class values present within the school existed for at least a number of boys in this study. Hence, it is not warranted to posit that a common set of values exists for all individuals occupying the same social class, or experiencing similar economic constraints. In fact, this review in no way suggests there is not a type of collective morality or esteem for certain values or goals, though as discussed previously, the "relative distance" (Taylor, 1978) of lofty goals is *likely* to vary as a function of social class. Though tendencies exist, there are always exceptions to the rule and these exceptions seem to be related to a source of parental support. A "common-man" boy who displayed an affinity for school would be considered "college material" by his parents, and to some extent by himself. In contrast, a boy of the same class and intelligence whose school experience did not lead to initial rewarding outcomes would be more likely to "accept his lot in life" and expect to maintain his class position (Kahl & Gilbert, 1993).

It is possible to explore reasons for the choices of these young men by considering the nature of habitus as conceptualized by Bourdieu as an enduring part of the nature of the individual. If it is enduring it is possible that certain groups are socialized to accept their position rather than question "their lot in life" (Kahl, 1953). In this study, soft domination was the mechanism through which those initially unsuccessful in school chose a path that did not alter their class position. As a result of certain life conditions, the role of socialization and the absence of certain symbolic capital, these individuals did not have the opportunity to seriously reflect on concepts like inequality, injustice and the like. Sustaining life, meeting basic needs, and the chores of daily existence *became* habitus greatly influencing personal disposition and ambition. It would also follow that values and aspirations for the future, shaped by a certain material deprivation, would be altered along these lines. Hence, this acceptance is mediated and ultimately influenced by the structural mechanisms which have shaped a compliant disposition to external constraints (Bourdieu, 1990; 1996; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Swartz, 1997). As in the Gaskell study, these boys were not threatened, forced to believe that they were "not smart in school." However their own subjective experience of academic failure, along with the experience of economic deprivation was likely to place constraint upon individual aspirations (Bourdieu, 1996; Kahl, 1953).

Another notable finding was that the boys in Kahl's research placed the primary responsibility for their success or failure upon themselves. In other words, if one succeeds in school, one is meant to pursue a university education and corresponding occupational success. Again, the underlying assumption holds that those whose inherent skills and ability leads them to educational success are deserving, while those whose talents are not academic deem *themselves* inadequate to aspire to the unfamiliar (Bourdieu, 1996; Kahl, 1953). This tendency to turn inward and blame oneself for individual failures has also been found to be associated with social class position. Specifically, those who occupy the lower classes are more likely to place responsibility for personal failure upon individual factors, such as their own personalities. In contrast the upper middle-classes are more likely to attribute the cause of failure to sources outside of themselves; extrinsic factors (Kahl, 1953, Kahl & Gilbert, 1993).

The early years of young adulthood are a time when "those who have set their sights on high-status professions must take those first critical steps toward turning their dreams into reality" (McClelland, 1990 p. 102). It seems that those boys in Kahl's study who became discouraged in the schooling process were no less talented than their academically successful counterparts (Kahl, 1953). However, their lower aspirations can be explained by an educational process through which individuals from disadvantaged social origins come to accept class- related barriers that cause them to lower their original goals (Kerckhoff, 1976 as cited in McClelland, 1990). For the dreams and aspirations of young people represent an "internalization of objective probabilities for success- a calculus each individual performs, perhaps more unconsciously than consciously, of the likelihood he or she has of achieving a given goal" (McClelland, 1990, p.103).

CONCLUSIONS

It is important to recognize that the literature reviewed in this chapter lend support to the structural side of the subjective-objective debate, in so far as economic constraint is presented as the primary determinant of the life chances and choices of the young. Though individual agency cannot be denied, the various ways that individuals enact their reality has much to do with their histories of material experience (Bourdieu, 1990, Little, 1991;Morrow & Torres, 1994). Also, by applying the conceptual framework of Pierre Bourdieu, a hierarchically structured social system, imbalances of power and social inequalities are accepted as facts (Bellamy, 1994; Bourdieu, 1990, 1996; Harker, Mahar & Wilkes, 1990, Howe, 1998; Swartz, 1997).

Bourdieu's theory of practice and specifically the concept of habitus has assisted in explaining the varying aspirations and achievements of young adults. Habitus has been presented as dispositions and values influenced by structural (economic) constraints and it has been assumed enduring in its nature because it is a result of the history of an individuals life experience. Importantly, Bourdieu does not reduce agents to mere products of social position through his construct of habitus, though he recognizes the difficulty for agents to transcend the structural constraints they experience (Bellamy, 1994; Bourdieu, 1990; Harker, Mahar & Wilkes, 1990; Swartz, 1997).

Bourdieu describes instances in which "the subject is negatively sanctioned because the environment they encountered is too different from the one to which he is accustomed" (Bourdieu, 1996; Little, 1995). The social and cultural capital accrued by students from more privileged backgrounds multiplies with their educational certification to produce educational and occupational success. Socialization processes can orient individuals toward particular goals via the successful or unsuccessful transmission of cultural capital, which is contingent upon economic capital (McClelland, 1990). Individual agents with different experiences of the material world (contingent upon class background) are rewarded differentially contingent upon the conformity of their habitus to dominant social institutions, one being the educational institution. It is asserted that the unequal value assigned to different classes of individuals tends to favor dominant group values and lifestyle. Hence, these values are the ones reflected (valued) within the educational institution and the children of upper and middle-class homes may find their schooling experience more compatible with previous socialization and hence, school success easier to attain.

A lack of economic resources is also likely to impact on goal-setting. Individuals whose material resources have been limited are likely to make decisions that reflect this deprivation. Thus, lowering goals or choosing to pursue different goals in the face of economic (structural) constraints is likely to result (Kahl, 1953; McClelland, 1990; Bourdieu, 1996). Cultural capital includes experience with the behavioral patterns of the dominant classes, and the cultivation of a certain disposition accepted within middle-class social institutions. Levels of social and cultural capital are also likely to be lower for those from lower social class backgrounds. Social capital reflects parental connections and support, and encouragement (both financial and moral) and cultural capital includes access and exposure to high culture. It is expected that this study will show that economically disadvantaged youth do not have the same access to cultural capital and social connections as their financially privileged school- mates. Thus, it can be predicted that they will not likely aspire to the same types of goals as their more socially advantaged counterparts. The combination of the incompatibility of their values with the dominant values reflected in the school, lack of social and cultural capital, and experience of material deprivation will likely produce aspirations different from those of middle and upper-class youth (Bourdieu, 1985; 1990; 1993; 1996).

APPLICATIONS: A STUDY OF EDUCATIONAL GOAL-SETTING

The primary independent variable reported in this thesis is the student's social class background and the dependent variable is educational plans (Porter, Porter & Blishen, 1982; Taylor, 1978). Parental education is the second independent variable that is predicted to have a positive relationship with educational plans. Other variables have been documented in the literature to have positive relationships with social class and parental education to, in turn influence educational goals. These include parental support (social capital), exposure to high culture (cultural capital), academic self-concept (Marsh & Yeung, 1998), academic achievement, and school program. Variables that have not been included in the data analysis that have been found to also influence educational goals are gender, place of residence, religious affiliation, and race (Oakes, 1985; Porter, Porter & Blishen, 1982).

Social class background and parental education are also predicted to positively correlate with the social and cultural capital possessed by students. Access to social and cultural capital in turn, is thought to impact their academic self-concept, grades, school program, and educational goals. Hence, social capital and cultural capital, academic self-concept, school achievement, school program are conceptualized as variables that intervene between both social class and parental education and educational goals.

It is predicted that social class, parental education as well as social and cultural capital will be positively related to the school-related variables (academic self-concept, grades and school program). This is predicted because schooling will likely be a more negative experience for disadvantaged youth than their economically-privileged counterparts. Both economic deprivation and the incompatibility of the economically disadvantaged student's values with those present within the school, are likely to make the school environment difficult to manage (Bourdieu, 1996; Swartz, 1997). As a result of the incompatibility of previous socialization with the school experience, youth from less privileged social origins are therefore likely to have a lowered academic self- concept. As well, since academic self-concept and academic achievement and school program are predicted to be causally related, it would not be surprising to find that disadvantaged youth achieve lower grades than their economically-privileged counterparts. As well, if these students do not achieve high grades in school, it can be reasonably assumed that they will be over-represented in non- academic high school programs that will not lead to university. In local high schools, non-academic program routes include the 13, 23, 33 route as opposed to the 10,20,30 academic program. It follows that if disadvantaged youth are concentrated in non- academic high school programs and thus fail to achieve in academic high school programs, they are unlikely to aspire to higher level educational goals.

SUMMARY

The school has been presented as an institution that is implicated in the maintenance and reproduction of social hierarchy and economic inequality. There is much evidence to suggest that economic deprivation inhibits the goals of students and that the constraints associated with social class cannot be overcome by simply providing students with equality of educational opportunity (Oakes, 1985, 1992). To give the same opportunities to students *in the classroom* is to assume that every child comes to the institution with the same capability of managing the environment. The image of the school as a fair and equal playing field ignores the social inequalities that exist between students and the impact that these inequalities have upon their ability to learn, school achievement and educational goals (Gaskell, 1992; Oakes, 1985; McClelland, 1990).

Individual agency has been presented in this review as socially constrained by experience and socialization within particular economic circumstances. Specifically, the student's socialization in an environment of material abundance or deprivation is likely to impact future goal-setting (Bellamy, 1994; Bourdieu, 1990; 1996; Harker, Mahar & Wilkes, 1990; Swartz, 1997). Since life experiences are filtered by the constraints of economic condition, those from non- privileged social origins are less likely to formulate high goals with respect to their education and career. In sharp contrast, it is probable that youth from the economically-privileged classes will be surrounded by images of success, see the connection between effort and reward, and believe that they are capable of attaining ambitious goals. Because such facilitating cultural and social capital is not as readily available to students from less privileged social origins, their educational and career goals will likely be lowered (McClelland, 1990).

The school is a particularly intriguing field to examine the impact of structure upon agency. The school is the institution that establishes "a boundary that separates those chosen by the great academic trials from the common people" (Bourdieu, p. 116, 1996). When students enact their distinct social identities (within the school), that have been shaped by economic circumstance, they become differentiated and "separated by magical boundaries" (Bourdieu, p. 117, 1996). Schooling clearly plays a crucial role in the distribution of knowledge, the distribution of power and privilege and the legitimation of this distribution (Bourdieu, 1990; 1996). The school persists as an institution that separates, categorizes and encourages students to "become who they are" (Bourdieu, 1996) while promoting the acceptance of inequality as inevitable (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Bourdieu, 1990, 1996). Hence, as an institution the educational system reflects upper middle-class values and makes those whose previous socialization does not match this value-set feel uncomfortable in the school environment. The path students choose and the goals that they set are partly the product of whether their schooling experience been a success or failure, and importantly, so is their confidence to desire and believe that they can attain certain goals (Bellamy, 1994; Bourdieu, 1996; Swartz, 1997; Taylor, 1978).

Each institution in society possesses it's rules (norms) and there are always those who come better equipped or prepared to play in a particular field of power. Within the educational institution, students who readily accept their unfamiliarity (incompatible habitus) with the game give up or drop out early. These individuals calculate the probability of success and often conclude that the game is not worth playing (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; McClelland, 1990). Even for the economically disadvantaged students whose goals transcend the structural constraints of their class position, their unfamiliarity with the rules of the game will likely make these goals difficult to attain. In Gaskell's (1992) research and Kahl's (1953) study, there were sample members from the economically disadvantaged classes who challenged their destinies by achieving school success and aspiring to high goals. Though it is possible for these exceptional students to succeed because of a their work ethic, it is unlikely that they would have the same access to the cultural and social capital that is available to middle or upper-class students with comparable grades and intelligence. As Bourdieu asserts in much of his work, cultural capital and social connections combine with educational success to give privileged youth an even greater advantage. The rules of the game always work in the favor of those best equipped to play (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990,1996; Gaskell, 1992; Kahl 1953).

The predictions formulated in the previous sections are based upon the assumption that those familiar with "the rules" in any field of power, in this case the school, will feel more at ease in this context, and better able to manage the environment. With time and effort it is possible for the socially disadvantaged to learn the rules and play the game, those who develop this capability later are always catching up, and those who were born in the "right" position have a natural advantage (Bourdieu, 1996). Thus, while there are no absolute certainties, there are tendencies and pre-dispositions to make certain choices in life (Bourdieu, 1990; Harker, 1984). Though the students in this study are presented as active agents in terms of setting their educational and occupational goals, the evidence suggests that their goals will be determined more by economic structures than their own will (Bourdieu, 1990, 1996; Harker, Mahar & Wilkes, 1990).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter will describe the sample, the research instrument (questionnaire), the operationalization of variables, and introduce the data analysis techniques applied in this study. There will also be a brief discussion of the ethical procedures that were followed in conducting this research.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE

The data for this exploratory study were collected using a self-report questionnaire administered by the researcher to a convenience sample of 117 senior high students attending three local high schools (Borg et al, 1996). The sample is homogeneous in that all members but six were in grade twelve when they completed the survey in the spring of 2000. Sample members did vary however in terms of gender, social class background, and school program.

The mean age of the students was 17.54 years. Thus, most were grade 12 students of 17 or 18 years of age. Due to the small number of schools (and therefore students) participating in the research, grade 10 and 11 students were also surveyed in an attempt to increase the sample size. Of the sample, 53.8% were females, and 45.3% were males, making the gender ratio fairly even.

The selection of twelfth- grade students was based upon the assumption that educational goals are more crystallized for senior students than for their younger counterparts (Ashton & Lowe, 1990; Gaskell, 1992). Indeed, the last year of high school presents a crossroad for students in that it is a time of crucial decision- making regarding future education (Ashton & Lowe, 1991).

Testing the hypotheses developed in chapter one would ideally involve a large sample of Alberta high school students (N= 1000+). This was not possible due to financial and time constraints, although the three public schools chosen offered a context in which there were students from varying social class backgrounds, enrolled in diverse programs.

The first high school is located in a primarily middle-class area of a suburb and offered vocational, general and advanced programs. The second school is located just outside of the suburbs, drew both middle-class suburban and less affluent rural students. This school also offered vocational, general and advanced school programs. The third school is located in a town not far from the suburbs and also draws students from various social classes. It too offers vocational, general and advanced school programs.

It is important to note that the sample used for this study is limited in that the students at these three schools are not representative of students from families at the very high or the very low extremes of the economic spectrum. All three of the schools are composed of primarily middle class students and the variation in their economic condition is likely limited to variations within the middle class. However, even though it is recognized that the schools do not provide information about students at the extreme poles of the economic spectrum, they were deemed to provide a sufficiently diverse sample of students to offer valuable information about what factors influence the goal-setting of at least some senior high students in Alberta.

DATA COLLECTION AND INSTRUMENT

The first step in gathering the data was to administer the questionnaire to the high school students attending the three schools. The questionnaire includes items concerning the student's social class background, access to social and cultural capital through familial channels, academic self-concept, academic achievement, school program, and their future educational goals. The operationalization of these variables is reported the next section of this chapter.

OPERATIONALIZATION OF VARIABLES

In order to carry out this research, it was necessary to operationalize the following concepts, an account of which is provided below:

Independent Variables

a. Social Class Background: [questionnaire item # 1].

The item used to determine the student's social class background was a self-report of both mother's and father's (or guardian's) occupation. Social class was then operationalized by using the categories of the Blishen socioeconomic index for the total Canadian labour force which itself is based upon 1981 census data (Blishen et al, 1987). The mean score for the occupations of parents and/or guardians was then used for the data analysis. It is important to note that there was not much of a discrepancy between the mother's and father's (or guardian's) occupational level in any of the students surveyed. Therefore, taking the mean score for both occupations did not obscure the data.

Since the Second World War, varying socioeconomic indexes have been developed to represent the complex occupational structure of advanced capitalism (Blishen et al, 1987). The Blishen scale was adopted because it includes income as a measure in the equation utilized to "situate individuals within a complex, stratified division of labour" (Blishen et al , 1987, p. 471). Since the economic dimension of social class determined by family income is an important focus in this study, the Blishen scale is the most appropriate scale to use. The alternative to the Blishen scale is the Pineo- Porter-McRoberts scale. This scale does not include family income in the classification of occupations, rather, it uses the status of occupations to derive scores. Since a measure of income is theoretically pertinent to this study, the Blishen classification was chosen over the Pineo-Porter McRoberts classification.

Blishen scores for the sample ranged from 23.41 to 75.60. These scores were collapsed into an ordinal scales of low (23.41-38.05), medium (40.00- 59.94), and high (60.11- 75.60) social class for the cross-tabulations in chapter four. Examples of occupations in the high range include doctors, lawyers teachers and accountants. Occupations in the medium category include middle managers, dental assistants, lab technicians, secretaries and skilled trades. The low range occupations include construction work, waitress, cashier and janitorial work.

b. Parental Education [items 2, {3,4}]

Looker et al (1994) have shown the important influence that the level of parental education plays on a student's educational and occupational goals (Looker, 1994).

Parental education was measured by student reports on their parents or guardians level of education. Using five point Likert - type response choices below, students were asked to indicate how much schooling that their parents or guardians completed. The choices were as follows:

1. completed junior high school or less
2. completed high school
3. completed part of a vocational or technical program (N.A.I.T. , S.A.I.T. , etc.)
4. completed vocational or technical school
5. completed part of a program at community college
6. completed community college
7. completed part of a program at university
8. completed university
9. completed a post graduate degree (masters or doctorate)

The mean score for both parents (or guardian's) education was calculated. These scores ranged from 1 to 9 and were trichotomized into ordinal scales of low (1-3) medium (3.5-5.5) and high (6-9) categories for the cross-tabulations.

c. Social Capital: [questionnaire items [48, 49, 50, 51, 52]

Bellamy (1994) aptly defines social capital as "the aggregate of actual or potential resources which are linked to the possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of acquaintances and recognition" (Bellamy, 1994, p.123).

As established in the review of the literature, the possession of social capital by youth is highly contingent upon parent's support and social connections. Social capital is thus operationalized by using four five point Likert items. The categories students chose from in these four items were as follows:

1. Never
2. Seldom
3. Occasionally
4. Often
5. Very often

The questionnaire items were as follows:

1. How often do your parents show concern regarding school assignments?
2. How often do your parents spend time assisting you with homework assignments?
3. How often do your parents attend school events?
4. How often do your parents visit or contact the school?

The scores on each of the four items were combined into a summated scale ranging from 4 to 20. The scores obtained ranged from a low of 4 to a high of 19. The purpose of these measures was to ascertain the level of a student's social capital by means of calculating the level of parental involvement. This notion of social capital as 'networks' or connections, established informally through the family, is consistent with Pierre Bourdieu's conceptual framework. The specific measures used in this study are derived from E. Dianne Looker's (1994) study of parents as active capital (1994). These scores were later dichotomized (low 4-11 and high 12-19) for the purpose of performing Cross-tabulations.

d. Cultural Capital: [questionnaire items 27, 31, 33, 37, 41, 43, 44]

The questionnaire items developed to measure cultural capital are based on Di Maggio's (1982) study of academic performance and cultural capital. This research found a positive relationship between cultural capital and student achievement. Though the items formulated to measure cultural capital in this project do not replicate the items used in the Di Maggio study, his study was influential in formulating the items, insofar as he too sought to measure the positive relationship between the knowledge of art, classical music and literature on the one hand and academic self-concept, achievement and goals on the other. The items formulated to test levels of cultural capital indicated the students' familiarity with and participation in high culture. The questionnaire items included five point Likert-style items.

There were three types of Likert-style categories that students were given for different questions. These Likert categories were as follows:

1. Never
2. Seldom
3. Occasionally
4. Often
5. Very often

OR

1. Not at all familiar
2. Slightly familiar
3. Familiar
4. Quite familiar
5. Extremely familiar

OR

1. No
1. Not likely
2. Maybe
3. Most likely
4. Definitely

There were also items in which students indicated how many composer's or artist's names they recognized out of 5. Finally, there was also one item in which students chose certain events they would like to attend, and a score was tabulated out of 3.

The questionnaire items were as follows:

1. Do you attend the ballet? (Likert item)
2. Do you attend the symphony? (Likert item)
3. Which events would you enjoy attending? (yes/no item, total out of 3 taken on high culture items- ballet, "Three Tenors", symphony) Choices:

1. A wrestling match
2. A ballet

3. A rock concert
4. A " Three Tenors" concert
5. A monster truck bash
6. The symphony
7. A hockey game
8. How familiar are you with the works of the ancient Greek author, Homer? (Likert item)
9. Are you familiar with the following composers' names? (yes/no response, total out of 5)

   Choices:

   Haydn
   Kirchner
   Beethoven
   Telemann
   Schumann

10. If you went to an art gallery, would you recognize the works of the Dutch artist Van Gogh? (Likert item)
11. Do you recognize the following artists' names? (yes/no response, total out of 5)

    Choices:

    Da Vinci
    Munch
    Monet
    Picasso
    Renoir

There was a total possible of 33 for all of the cultural capital items. Further discussion of this variable will be dealt with in the next chapter.

e. Academic Self-concept: [questionnaire items 7, 8]

Academic self-concept has been shown to positively effect academic performance (Marsh & Yeung, 1998). In this project, academic self-concept was measured using Likert style items prompting self-reports of academic performance, and perceived probability of acceptance to post-secondary programs.

The Likert scales were as follows:

1. Much below average
2. Below average
3. About the same as most of my classmates
4. Slightly above most of my classmates
5. Much above most of my classmates

OR

1. Extremely unlikely to be accepted
2. Low chance of acceptance
3. Average chance of acceptance
4. High chance of acceptance
5. Extremely high chance of acceptance

The questionnaire items were as follows:

1. Compared to most of the students in your grade, how would you rate your overall academic capability?
2. What are the chances that you would be accepted to university?

The scores obtained on the academic self-concept variable ranged from 9 to 20 out of a possible 20. These scores were trichotomized into an ordinal scale of low (9-12), medium (13-15), and high (16-20) for the purposes of the cross-tabulations.

f. Academic Achievement: [questionnaire item 5]

The academic achievement of students was measured with a Likert item that asks for self-reports of grades (Taylor, 1978).

The Likert categories were as follows:

1. Below average (below 50%)
2. Average or passing grades (50- 65%)
3. Above average (65-80%)
4. Honors (80% or higher)
5. Honors with distinction (90% or higher)

The questionnaire item was as follows:

1. What are most of your grades like in school?

The scores obtained for this item ranged from a low of 1 to a high of 5 out of 5. The coded responses were summated and trichotomized into an ordinal scale of low (1-2), medium (3) and high (4-5) for the purpose of cross-tabulations.

g. School Program [questionnaire item 6]

The school program of students was measured with a 6 point Likert item that asks for self-reports of school program. The Likert categories were as follows:

1. general program with some vocational courses
2. Full general program
3. Partial general/partial advanced program
4. Full advanced program
5. Partial advanced/partial I.B. program
6. Full I.B. program

The questionnaire item was as follows:

In what type of school program are you currently enrolled?

The scores for this item ranged from a low of 1 to a high of 5 out of a possible 6. The coded responses were summated and trichotomized into an ordinal scale of low (1-2), medium(3) and high (4-5) for the purpose of cross-tabulations.

Dependent Variable

h. Educational Plans: [questionnaire items 11, 12 and 14]

The educational plans of students in this sample were measured by self-reports of educational goals. If the student indicated in items 11 and 12 that they hope to pursue further education, they were asked to indicate what type of educational goals they had in questionnaire item 14. This was a Likert style item. The Likert categories were as follows:

1. Complete vocational school
2. Complete community college
3. Complete university education
4. Complete post-graduate work
5. Other

The questionnaire item was as follows:

What type of post-secondary education do you hope to pursue?

The scores for educational plans ranged from a low of 1 to a high of 4 out of a possible 4.

The low, medium, high parameters for the cross-tabulations were as follows:

Low (1), medium (2-3), and high (4-5)

See table 5 in Chapter 4 for a detailed description of the parameters for the cross-tabulations.

OVERVIEW OF DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES

There were two types of data analysis used in this thesis. The first type of data analysis used was factor analysis. Factor analysis is a technique that allows the researcher to visualize the unidimensionality or multidimensionality of variables. Factor analysis also allows the researcher to create scales of measurement for different variables.

The second data analysis technique used in this project was cross-tabular analysis. Cross-tabular analysis allows the researcher to collapse the data into manageable ordinal categories (parameters) such as high medium and low so that every sample member will be represented in one of these categories. It also allows the bi-variate relationships between variables to be displayed clearly. The Somer's d test (as well as the significance test for Somer's d) was also run on the cross-tabulations discussed in chapter 4. This test of association was run to test the strength of the relationships observed in the cross-tabular analysis.

A detailed description of the data analysis techniques is provided in Chapter 4.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

One important ethical consideration for this research was the protection of the anonymity of the participants. It is important to note that students were not asked to identify themselves beyond giving their age, grade and sex on the questionnaire. As well, though participation in this study was encouraged, it was completely voluntary. Before participating in the study, the student was required to present a consent form signed either by themselves or, if under the age of 18, by their parent or guardian. The opportunity for opting out was also given to students. Students who chose not to participate, or whose parent or guardians did not want them to participate, worked at their desk while others completed the questionnaire.

Another ethical concern was the disruption caused by completing the questionnaire. It is recognized that grade twelve students (and other high school students) are engaged in many school activities and exams, and that this interruption of their routine activities was an inconvenience. However, the questionnaire was brief and completing it impinged minimally upon the daily schedule of students and school staff. Furthermore, the results of this study are to be reported to school officials when this study is completed. Participation in this study was important beyond the scope of the completion of this research project, as social factors that shape the academic goal-settingof youth in this new millennium are of interest and concern for everyone interested in the academic plans youth.

SUMMARY

This chapter has provided a description of the sample used in this research, a description of the research instrument, and the operationalization of variables measured in this study. An introduction to the data analysis techniques and ethical considerations were also included.

The 117 students who participated in this research completed a 52 item questionnaire that asked them questions regarding their economic background (social class),their educational plans, their parent's education, the amount of parental support and encouragement they receive (social capital), their recognition of high culture art and literature (cultural capital recognition), their participation in cultural activities (cultural capital engagement), their academic self-concept, grades and school program. The data gathered from the questionnaire were analyzed using factor analysis and cross-tabular analysis. Factor analysis was used to examine the pattern of items that clustered together and to create scales of measurement for the social and cultural capital variables. Cross-tabulations were useful in testing the bi-variate relationships between variables using the scales created by the factor analysis. Finally, the main ethical consideration in this research was the protection of the participant's anonymity. This was ensured by requiring that the respondents not identify themselves on the questionnaire beyond giving their age, grade and gender. As well, participation in this study was encouraged but completely voluntary.

CHAPTER 4

DESCRIPTION & ANALYSIS OF DATA

The purpose of this chapter is to present the results of a factor analysis and a cross-tabular analysis. The data analysis will concentrate first on the results of the factor analysis and then the cross-tabulations.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis in this research was carried out by means of factor analysis and cross- tabular analysis. Firstly, a factor analysis was performed to confirm the validity of the research instrument. The results of this factor analysis contributed to the confirmation of the measures of social capital, the re- conceptualization of the cultural capital variable, and the creation of scales to measure cultural capital. This re-conceptualization and the creation of scales of measurement determined how cultural capital was analyzed in the cross- tabular analysis. Secondly, cross-tabulations were performed to clearly display the bi-variate relationships between variables. In other words, cross-tabulations were performed to determine the distribution of students along the ranges of the independent and dependent variables. The Somer's d test of association (along with the significance test for Somer's d) was also run on the cross-tabulations to test the strength of the bi-variate relationships ($p \leq 0.10$).

Factor Analysis

SPSS software was used to perform a principal component factor analysis. Using varimax rotation, items were rotated for each factor analysis until clean loadings were generated.

Factor analysis is a technique that allows the researcher to map out the relationships among a set of items by showing their tendency to "cluster". A factor or "cluster" denotes a group of variables whose members correlate more highly amongst each other than they do with variables outside of that cluster (Babbie, 1986). From these clustered items (factors), summated scales can be created, and these items can be used in further analysis. Importantly, the pattern of "clusters", or factors, provide valuable information about the unidimensionality or multidimensionality of measured constructs. For example, in this study the concept of cultural capital had to be re-conceptualized from a unidimensional variable to a multidimensional variable. This reconceptualization will be discussed in the next section.

The results of the factor analysis (see Table 1 and Table 2) made necessary the re-conceptualizing of one of the most key variables studied in this research. Specifically, measures of cultural capital had to be re-conceptualized as being two-dimensional and thus, the scales used to measure this concept had to be regrouped into two summative indices. The changes made to the scales used to measure cultural capital were as follows:

One of the most important discoveries of this factor analysis was the uncovering of two distinct dimensions of cultural capital. When performing the factor analysis, it was found that what has previously been referred to simply by the umbrella term "cultural capital" appeared in this study to present itself as having two distinct forms. Specifically, the data revealed that the cultural capital dimensions were evident in two distinct clusters (factors), thus suggesting that there are two distinct dimensions of cultural capital that were measured by the items. These two distinct dimensions of cultural capital have been labeled as *cultural capital recognition* and *cultural capital engagement.* The discovery and creation of a multidimensional cultural capital variable is one of the unique contributions of this study to the measurement of this concept.

The social capital items that were confirmed to cluster and were used in subsequent analysis were as follows:

1. How often parents show concern regarding school assignments
2. The time parents spend assisting with homework assignments
3. How often parents attend school events
4. How often parents visit or contact the school

The item that asked students what their parents would prefer they did after high school had a low loading and was not included in the analysis.

Table 1

Factor analysis of Social capital measures

Rotated Component Matrix

	Component	
	1	2
How often do your parents show concern regarding your school assignments?	.803	-.096
How often do your parents assist you with your homework?	.780	.081
How often do your parents attend school events?	.701	.312
How often do your parents visit or contact the school?	.579	.430
In general, what would your family prefer that you do after high school?	.204	.342

Table 2

Factor Analysis of Cultural Capital Recognition and Cultural Capital Engagement Measures

Rotated Component Matrix

	Component	
	1	2
Do you attend the ballet?	.001	.800
Would you enjoy attending a ballet?	.110	.723
Do you attend the symphony?	.170	.626
How familiar are you with the works of Homer?	.631	.075
Number of composers names you are familiar with (out of 5)	5.69	.358
Would you recognize a Van Gogh work in an art gallery?	.815	.004
Number of artists names you recognize (out of 5)	.805	.115

Cross-tabular Analysis

Cross-tabulations were also an important data analysis technique applied in this research. Cross- tabulations (contingency tables) were useful in determining the distribution of research subjects along the ranges of the independent and dependent variables. Cross-tabular analysis allows the researcher to collapse the data into manageable ordinal categories (parameters) such as high, medium, and low so that every sample member will be located in one of these categories. In this case, the variables were collapsed in order to be cross-tabulated and the values of certain variables were then dichotomized or trichotomized. Cross-tabulation was the preferred method of data collection for this research because the data could be simply and meaningfully displayed to show the distribution of the sample along "High-Low" or "High-Medium-Low" ranges of different variables (Babbie, 1996). The variable ranges for the cross-tabulations are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Variables Collapsed into Dichotomies and Trichotomies

Variable	Low	Medium	High
Social class	(23.41-38.05)	(40.00-59.94)	(60.11-75.60)
Parental education	(1-3)	(3.5-5.5)	(6-9)
Social capital	(4-11)	N/A	(12-19)
Cultural-capital recognition	(4-11)	N/A	(12-18)
Cultural-capital engagement	(2-3)	N/A	(4-11)
Academic self-concept	(9-12)	(13-15)	(16-20)
Grades	(1-2)	(3)	(4-5)
Program	(1-2)	(3)	(4-5)
Educational plans	(1)	(2-3)	(4-5)

Somer's d

It is important to run "measures of association" on cross-tabulations to determine the strength of the relationships between variables. If a cross-tabulation shows that there is a notable percentage difference between an independent and a dependent variable, a test of association will show the strength of this relationship. There are several PRE measures of association that may be used for ordinal-level variables. The Somer's d test is the most appropriate measure of association for this data because the independent and dependent variables have been distinguished.[1] The formula for computing Somer's d is as follows:

$$\text{Somer's } d_{yx} = \frac{N_s - N_d}{N_s + N_d + T_y}$$

or

$$\text{Somer's } d_{yx} = \frac{\text{Number of concordant pairs} - \text{Number of discordant pairs}}{\text{Number of concordant pairs} + \text{Number of discordant pairs} + \text{Pair tied on the dependent variable}}$$

Somer's d values can range from - 1.0 which is a perfect negative association (all pairs are discordant) to + 1.0, a perfect positive association (all pairs are concordant). The ability for Somer's d to vary between -1.0 and + 1.0 makes is an advantage for interpretation (Loether & McTavish, 1993; Rosenberg, 1968).

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[1] Other tests of association that can be used for ordinal level data are as follows: Tau-a, Tau-b,Tau-c and Gamma (*G*). It is worth noting why these PRE measures are less appropriate to use for this data. Tau-a, Tau-b and Tau-c all include (and do not adjust for) tied variables in the denominator and therefore it is difficult to reach a value of -1.0 or +1.0 using any of these measures. This makes these values less "interpretable". Secondly, gamma is undesirable because, theoretically, a value could be computed based on only one pair when all other pairs are tied on one or both variables (Loether & McTavish, 1993).

Significance Test for Somer's d

The purpose of the significance test for Somer's d is to test if the strength of the relationship (computed with Somer's d) is in fact significant. The significance test in this case is not used for generalization to a population but to test the null hypothesis. The null hypothesis predicts that the dependent variable is not related to the independent variable. In other words, the dependent variable is randomly distributed with respect to the independent variable. To refute the null hypothesis, the significance value (p value) was set at $p \leq 0.10$. This means that only 10 times out of 100 the relationship is due to chance alone, and at this level the relationship assumed to be a "real" one (Babbie, 1994; Loether & McTavish, 1993).

Discussion of the Cross-tabulations

The discussion of the cross-tabulations will follow the order that the hypotheses are presented in Chapter one. The hypothesis relating to each relationship will be given, along with a table displaying the results of the cross-tabulation. A discussion including a description of the results and how the results relate to the theoretical position of the thesis (Chapter two) will be provided for all cross-tabulations. The tables will be formatted such that the independent variable runs along the top of the table and the dependent variable runs along the left-hand side of the table. Somer's d values and significance values will also be provided for each bi-variate table.

Social Class Background, Parental Education and Educational Plans

Hypothesis 1a:

Students from high social class backgrounds are more likely than their counterparts to have high educational plans.

Hypothesis 1b:

Students whose parents have high levels of education are more likely than their counterparts to have high educational plans.

Table 4

Educational Plans by Social Class Background

		Social Class Background			
		Low	Med (percent)	High	
Educational Plans	High	35.3 (6)	36.8 (21)	65.5 (19)	46
	Med	5.9 (1)	28.1 (16)	20.7 (6)	23
	Low	58.8 (10)	35.1 (20)	13.8 (4)	34
	Total	100.0 (17)	100.0 (57)	100.0 (29)	103

Somer's d_{yx} = 0.286 p= **0.002**

Table 5

Educational Plans by Parental Education

		Parental Education			
		Low	Med (percent)	High	
Educational plans	High	40.0 (14)	45.0 (18)	50.0 (17)	49
	Med	20.0 (7)	22.5 (9)	26.5 (9)	25
	Low	40.0 (14)	32.5 (13)	23.5 (8)	35
	Total	100.0 (35)	100.0 (40)	100.0 (34)	109

Somer's d_{yx} = 0.103 p =0.214

As Table 4 indicates, there is a substantial relationship between students' social class background and their educational goals (*Somer's* d_{yx} = 0.286; p= 0.002). Students from high social class backgrounds are over 30% more likely to have high educational aspirations than their less financially secure counterparts (65.5 % vs. 35.3%). The most intuitive explanation for this finding is that students from wealthy families have the financial resources available for post-secondary education. The expense of a university education is certainly a factor that every student must consider in the decision to pursue further schooling after high school. As Ann Dowsett notes, university fees for a basic undergraduate education in Canada have more than doubled in the past ten years, making it especially difficult for underprivileged students to pursue post-secondary education (Dowsett, 2001).

Another reason for this finding may be that an upbringing that includes greater access to economic resources somehow raises students' goals. Adopting the Bourdieuian conceptual framework, this finding may be attributed to the financially privileged child's habitus supported by his or her social and cultural resources. Wealthy children are more likely than children from modest backgrounds to grow accustomed to a lifestyle that includes exposure to financially successful role models (parents). This lifestyle, coupled with the social and cultural tools financially secure parents expose their children to, make lofty career goals a likely result for these students (Bourdieu, 1990; 1996). Another possibility for this finding could be that wealthy parents pressure their children to pursue the same types of careers that they themselves have (Boudieu, 1990, 1993; Dowsett, 2001).

As Table 5 reveals, there is a small percentage difference relationship between parental education and educational plans (*Somer's* $d_{yx} = 0.103$; $p = 0.214$). Half of those whose parents have a high level of education (50.0%) are likely to have high educational plans whereas only slightly fewer (40.0%) students whose parents have with low levels of education have high educational plans. However, as the Somer's d value and the p value show, this relationship is not significant.

This finding is surprising, given that the literature supports the relationship between parental education and educational goals. The literature on this subject states that it seems likely that highly educated parents would be more likely than less educated parents to desire higher education for their children. Differences in parental familiarity (those with higher education having a higher degree of familiarity) with the educational system and university programs (admission or degree requirements for example) requirements are posited to play a role in creating the expected relationship (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Maxwell, 1995;Oakes, 1985).

In summary, although social class and parental education were both predicted to have a positive relationship with educational plans, only the relationship between social class and educational plans was found to be substantial and significant.

Social Class and Parental Education

Hypothesis 2:

Students from high social class backgrounds are more likely than their counterparts to have parents with high levels of education.

Table 6

Parental Education by Social Class Background

		Social Class Background			
		Low	Med (percent)	High	
Parental Education	High	11.8 (2)	26.6 (17)	60.0 (18)	37
	Med	47.1 (8)	37.5 (24)	26.7 (8)	40
	Low	41.2 (7)	35.9 (23)	13.3 (4)	34
	Total	100.0 (17)	100.0 (64)	100.0 (30)	111

Somer's d_{yx} = 0.325 *p*= **0.000**

As Table 6 shows, those from the highest social class backgrounds were the most likely to have parents with a high level of education (60.0%) (*Somer's* d_{yx} = 0.325; *p*=

0.000). In contrast, those students from lower social class backgrounds were nearly 50% less likely to have parents with a high level of education (11.8%). This finding is not surprising and supports Hypothesis 2. Many high paying jobs (not all) require a high level of education. Hence, parents who possess this higher level of education are likely to be financially secure.

Social Class, Parental Education and Cultural Capital (recognition and engagement)

Hypothesis 3a:

Students from high social class backgrounds and students whose parents have high levels of education are more likely than their counterparts to have high cultural capital (recognition and engagement).

Table 7

Cultural Capital Recognition by Social Class Background

		Social Class Background			
		Low	Med. (percent)	High	
Cultural Capital Recognition	High	47.1 (8)	45.3 (29)	50.0 (15)	52
	Low	52.9 (9)	54.7 (35)	50.0 (15)	59
	Total	100.0 (17)	100.0 (64)	100.0 (30)	111

Somer's d_{yx} = 0.024 p= 0.774

Table 8

Cultural Capital Engagement by Social Class Background

		Social Class Background			
		Low	Med. (percent)	High	
Cultural-Capital engagement	High	35.3 (6)	32.8 (21)	33.3 (10)	37
	Low	64.7 (11)	67.2 (43)	66.7 (20)	74
	Total	100.0 (17)	100.0 (64)	100.0 (30)	111

Somer's d_{yx} = -0.008 p=0.924

Table 7 reveals that there is no relationship between social class background and the cultural capital recognition variable (*Somer's* d_{yx} = 0.024; p= 0.774). As discussed in a previous section, cultural capital recognition involves recognizing art, music and literature associated with the "high culture" of the dominant social classes (Di Maggio, 1982). It was found that students from high economic backgrounds are equally likely to have either high (50%) or low (50%) degrees of cultural capital recognition. Those from less financially privileged backgrounds are also quite evenly split on this variable: 47.1% of students from lower social class backgrounds have high cultural capital while 52.9% of these students have low cultural capital. This finding suggests the possibility that economic resources are not the main determinant of whether these students are exposed to art, literature and music. Evidently, something other than economic security determines these students' familiarity with high culture. Similar to the findings on the cultural capital recognition variable, Table 8 shows that economic background does not play a role in determining participation in cultural activities (*Somer's* d_{yx} = -0.008; p= 0.924). Students from higher and lower social class backgrounds are almost equally likely to engage in cultural activities such as going to the ballet or taking music lessons (33.3% versus 35.3%). Both groups of students are also likely to score low on the cultural capital engagement variable (students from lower social class backgrounds = 64.7%; students from high social class backgrounds = 66.7%). Again, in this particular sample of students, participation in cultural events is not as highly contingent upon economic background as the literature suggested. In fact, in the next section it will be shown that the main influence upon a student's degree of cultural capital is parental education, not social class.

Table 9

Cultural Capital Recognition by Parental Education

		Parental Education			
		Low	Med. (percent)	High	
Cultural-Capital Recognition	High	34.2 (13)	51.2 (21)	55.3 (21)	55
	Low	65.8 (25)	48.8 (20)	44.7 (17)	62
	Total	100.0 (38)	100.0 (41)	100.0 (38)	117

Somer's d_{yx} = 0.139 **p= 0.060**

Table 10

Cultural Capital Engagement by Parental Education

		Parental Education			
		Low	Med (percent)	High	
Cultural-Capital Engagement	High	34.2 (13)	26.8 (11)	42.1 (16)	40
	Low	65.8 (25)	73.2 (30)	57.9 (22)	77
	Total	100.0 (38)	100.0 (41)	100.0 (38)	117

Somer's d_{yx} = 0.052 p= 0.481

As Table 9 reveals, parental education positively influences the amount of cultural capital recognition that students have (*Somer's* d_{yx} = 0.139; p= 0.060). The students whose parents have the highest level of education are the most likely to have high cultural capital recognition (55.3%). In contrast, students whose parents have a low level of education are more than 20% less likely to have high cultural capital recognition (34.2%). Respondents whose parents have a *low* level of education are also much more likely than their counterparts to have *low* cultural capital recognition (65.8% as compared to 44.7%). The data suggest that parents' level of education influences their children in terms of exposure to art, music and literature. Bourdieu suggests in his theory of practice that by "passing on" their interest in high culture, highly educated parents informally expose their children to dominant group values (Bellamy, 1994; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Bourdieu, 1990; 1998).

It is informative that most of the students surveyed (65.8%) have low levels of cultural capital engagement and that parental education does not seem to have an influence upon this variable (*Somer's* $d_{yx} = 0.052$; $p = 0.481$). By comparing Tables 9 and 10 it becomes evident that students are much more likely to recognize art, music and literature than to participate in cultural activities. These results are rather counterintuitive. One would expect that recognition of high culture would lead to some type of participation in cultural events. However it appears not to. The data support the earlier finding that cultural capital is multi- dimensional (as suggested by the factor analysis), and a high level of one type of cultural capital does not necessarily lead to a high level of the other type. Bourdieu does not differentiate between types of cultural capital and this may be a shortcoming in his theoretical framework (Bourdieu, 1990; 1996).

Social Class background, Parental Education and Social Capital

Hypothesis 3b:

Students from high social class backgrounds and students whose parents have high levels of education are more likely than their counterparts to possess high levels of social capital.

Table 11

Social Capital by Social Class Background

		Social Class Background			
		Low	Med. (percent)	High	
Social Capital	High	52.9 (9)	35.9 (23)	50.0 (15)	47
	Low	47.1 (8)	64.1 (41)	50.0 (15)	64
	Total	100.0 (17)	100.0 (64)	100.0 (30)	111

Somer's $d_{yx} = 0.020$ p=0.819

Table 12

Social Capital by Parental Education

		Parental education			
		Low	Med. (percent)	High	
Social capital	High	34.2 (13)	31.7 (13)	60.5 (23)	49
	Low	65.8 (25)	68.3 (28)	39.5 (15)	68
	Total	100.0 (38)	100.0 (41)	100.0 (38)	117

Somer's $d_{yx} = 0.173$ p= **0.019**

As Table 11 reveals, social class background is not related to the amount of social capital students have (*Somer's* $d_{yx} = 0.020$; p= 0.819). Table 11 shows that the percentage of students from high economic backgrounds who have high social capital (50%) is almost the same (52.9%) as their lower social class counterparts. It seems that having access to economic resources has less of a bearing upon the degree of social capital than anticipated. This finding could be attributed to the possibility that something other than financial security leads parents to participate in their child's education. In fact, it seems that parental education is much more important than social class in determining a student's degree of social capital.

In support of hypothesis 3(b), Table 12 shows that while 60.5% of students whose parents are highly educated have high social capital, only 34.2% of their classmates whose parents are not highly educated have this resource (*Somer's* $d_{yx} = 0.173$; $p = 0.019$). As well, the children of the most educated parents are over 25% less likely to have low social capital (39.5%) than their counterparts whose parents are less educated (65.8%). Looker (1994) suggests that educated parents are actually a form of social capital for students. Bourdieu & Passeron (1977) would agree that educated parents are an important resource for students because they are more likely to encourage their students to do well in school, make contact with the school and help make the educational experience a comfortable one for their children. Their own familiarity with the school system (a result of experience) makes it easier for these parents to play an active role in their child's education (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Looker, 1994).

Social Class, Parental Education and Academic Self-concept

Hypothesis 3c:

Students from high social class backgrounds and students whose parents have high levels of education are more likely than their counterparts to have high academic self-concept.

Table 13

Academic Self-concept by Social Class Background

		Social Class Background			
		Low	Med (percent)	High	
Academic Self-concept	High	29.4 (5)	29.7 (19)	46.7 (14)	38
	Med	52.9 (9)	40.6 (26)	26.7 (8)	43
	Low	17.6 (3)	29.7 (19)	26.7 (8)	30
	Total	100.0 (17)	100.0 (64)	100.0 (30)	111

Somer's d_{yx} = 0.063 p= 0.499

Table 14

Academic Self-concept by Parental Education

		Parental Education			
		Low	Med (percent)	High	
Academic Self-concept	High	23.7 (9)	31.7 (13)	47.4 (18)	40
	Med.	31.6 (12)	53.7 (22)	28.9 (11)	45
	Low	44.7 (17)	14.6 (6)	23.7 (9)	32
	Total	100.0 (38)	100.0 (41)	100.0 (38)	117

Somer's d_{yx} = 0.211 p= **0.015**

As Table 13 demonstrates, those from higher economic backgrounds are almost 20% more likely than their counterparts to have high academic self-concept (46.7% as opposed to 29.4%)(*Somer's* d_{yx} = 0.063; p= 0.499). However, it is evident from the Somer's d value and the p value for this table that the percentage difference relationship is not significant. Though the literature on this subject supports the hypothesis that students from high social class backgrounds will have higher academic self-concepts than less financially secure students (Bourdieu, 1996;Gaskell, 1992;Oakes, 1985; Porter, 1965), this relationship was not confirmed in this research.

In contrast to the previous results in Table 13, the percentage differences shown in Table 14 are significant. Table 14 supports Hypothesis 3(c), and confirms that parental education does positively influence academic self-concept (*Somer's* $d_{yx} = 0.211$; $p = 0.015$). Students whose parents have a high level of education are the ones most often having high academic self-concept (47.4%), whereas only 23.7% of these students have low academic self-concept. Intriguingly, the opposite is the case for respondents whose parents have a low level of education. Only 23.7% of these students have high academic self-concept, while 44.7% have low academic self-concept.

Social Class Background, Parental Education and Grades

Hypothesis 3d:

Students from high social class backgrounds and students whose parents have a high level of education are more likely than their counterparts to have high grades.

Table 15

Grades by Social Class Background

		Social Class Background			
		Low	Med (percent)	High	
Grades	High	17.6 (3)	17.2 (11)	43.3 (13)	27
	Med	70.6 (12)	57.8 (37)	40.0 (12)	61
	Low	11.8 (2)	25.0 (16)	16.7 (5)	23
	Total	100.0 (17)	100.0 (64)	100.0 (30)	111

Somer's d_{yx} = 0.137 p= 0.126

Table 16

Grades by Parental Education

		Parental Education			
		Low	Med. (percent)	High	
Grades	High	18.4 (7)	24.4 (10)	28.9 (11)	28
	Med.	44.7 (17)	70.7 (29)	50.0 (19)	65
	Low	36.8 (14)	4.9 (2)	21.1 (8)	24
	Total	100.0 (38)	100.0 (41)	100.0 (38)	117

Somer's d_{yx} = 0.137 p= 0.114

As Table 15 reveals, there is a positive relationship percentage difference relationship between economic background and grades (*Somer's* d_{yx} = 0.137; *significance* = 0.126). It is evident from Table 15 that students from high social class backgrounds are the most likely to have high grades (43.3%). These high social class students are very unlikely to have low grades (16.7%). In contrast, their lower social class counterparts are almost 26% less likely to have high grades (only 17.6% compared to 43.3%). However, as the Somer's d and p values show this relationship is not significant.

Similarly, parental education is positively related to grades (*Somer's* d_{yx} = 0.137; p= 0.114). Specifically, Table 16 shows that most students sampled have average grades (55.6%), but students whose parents are highly educated are the most likely to have high grades (28.9% as compared to 18.4%). As was the case with the relationship between social class and grades, the relationship between parental education and grades is not significant.

Social Class Background, Parental Education and School Program

Hypothesis 3e:

Students from high social class backgrounds are more likely than their counterparts to be enrolled in advanced school programs.

Table 17

School Program by Social Class Background

		Social Class Background			
		Low	Med (percent)	High	
School Program	High	58.8 (10)	61.3 (38)	69.0 (20)	68
	Med	17.6 (3)	22.6 (14)	17.2 (5)	22
	Low	23.5 (4)	16.1 (10)	13.8 (4)	18
	Total	100.0 (17)	100.0 (62)	100.0 (29)	108

Somer's $d_{yx} = 0.072$ $p = 0.401$

Table 18

School Program by Parental Education

		Parental Education			
		Low	Med (percent)	High	
School Program	High	44.4 (16)	75.6 (31)	66.7 (24)	71
	Med	25.0 (9)	14.6 (6)	25.0 (9)	24
	Low	30.6 (11)	9.8 (4)	8.3 (3)	18
	Total	100.0 (36)	100.0 (41)	100.0 (36)	113

Somer's $d_{yx} = 0.173$ **$p = 0.026$**

It is important to note that most of the students sampled are enrolled in advanced school programs (63.0%). Table 17 shows that 69.0% of students from the highest social class backgrounds are enrolled in the most advanced school programs (*Somer's* $d_{yx} = 0.072$; $p = 0.401$), while 58.8% of their lower social class counterparts are enrolled in an advanced school program. However, as the Somer's d value and p value show, this relationship is not significant.

In contrast to the results shown in Table 17, the percentage difference relationships in Table 18 are significant. Table 18 shows that students whose parents have the highest levels of education are the students who are most often enrolled in advanced programs, while students whose parents have the lowest levels of education are least often enrolled in advanced programs (66.7% compared to 44.4%). (*Somer's* $d_{yx} = 0.173; p= 0.026$). Youth whose parents are highly educated are also very unlikely to be enrolled in a low school program (only 8.3%). In contrast, children of the less educated are much more likely to be in a low school program (30.6%).

Evidently, access to economic resources does have a positive relationship with academic self- concept, grades and type of school program. However, none of these relationships were found to be significant at the $p \leq 0.10$ level. While the literature on this topic supports positive and significant relationships between social class and all of the school-related variables (academic self-concept, grades, and school program), the findings do not concur with previous research.

According to the literature, there are positive relationships between social class and school-related variables because of the informal exposure wealthy children have to the dominant culture through familial channels. Dominant group parents inculcate their child with these 'tools' from early on, which proves beneficial when the child reaches school age. At this point the student has mastered the tools necessary to both feel confident and succeed in the school system, which reflects the dominant culture (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Bourdieu, 1990; 1996; 1998).

In contrast to the results obtained in regards to social class and the school variables, parental education does prove to be very important to both academic self-concept and school program (though not grades). The positive relationship between parental education with academic self-concept and school program supports the notion that highly educated parents positively influence their children in regards to school. These parents not only help their children to feel more capable within the school environment but they also encourage them to enroll in advanced school programs. Bourdieu would attribute these results to the academic confidence and familiarity passed on to these children from their parents. This confidence may result from a particular lifestyle that includes exposure to role models who have managed the school system successfully, and have informally familiarized their children with its expectations (Bourdieu, 1990, 1993, 1996; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977).

Summary

Some of the predictions made in Chapter one concerning social class background were confirmed by the data, whereas others were not. Importantly, the main hypothesis of this thesis was supported. As predicted, the relationship between social class background and educational plans was found to be positive and significant. Students from high social class backgrounds much more often have lofty educational goals than less financially secure classmates. In contrast, the predicted positive relationship between parental education and plans was not confirmed by the data. Though the percentage difference relationship between social class and parental education was positive, the Somer's d (PRE) measure showed that the relationship was not significant at the $p \leq 0.10$ level. This result is surprising, considering the amount of literature on this subject that supports the predicted relationship.

As was predicted in Chapter one, students from financially secure homes more often have parents with high levels of education than their peers whose parents are less well educated. In fact, social class background and parental education are so highly related that parental education may be an indicator of social class. Predictions made in the first chapter regarding social class and the school- related variables of academic self-concept, grades, and school program were surprisingly not substantiated. Though there were positive relationships in terms of percentage difference between social class and the school variables, these relationships were not significant (at $p \leq 0.10$).

Some unexpected results were also found related to social class and the cultural and social capital variables. When social class was cross-tabulated with social and cultural capital (recognition and engagement), these relationships were found to be small and not significant. These unexpected findings aside, the results of these cross-tabulations do support the main hypothesis of this thesis. The results suggest that wealthier students do have a definite advantage over their economically disadvantaged counterparts in terms of post- secondary goals.

Parental education was the second independent variable tested in the cross-tabulations. Surprisingly, parental education did not demonstrate the expected relationship with educational plans. Though a positive percentage difference relationship exists, the relationship is not significant. Importantly, however, parental education was shown to be positively related to social capital and cultural capital (recognition), supporting the predictions made in Chapter one. As hypothesized, students whose parents have the highest levels of education more often have high levels of social capital and cultural capital recognition than their peers whose parents have lower levels of education. Parental education was not shown to influence cultural capital engagement. In fact, it was found that most students have relatively low levels of cultural capital engagement.

In terms of parental education and the school variables, the results support the hypotheses that parental education is positively related to academic self-concept and to school program. However, the relationship between parental education and grades was not significant.

Given the results discussed in the previous sections, it should be noted that parental education demonstrates positive relationships with a number of variables included in this analysis. Most importantly in this regard, positive relationships were evident with respect to the social and cultural variables that were of particular interest in this research. Social class, on the other hand, was found to have substantial and positive relationships with educational plans but with none of the other variables (other than parental education).

Given the results discussed in the previous sections, it is worth giving special attention to the relationship between social class and parental education at this point. Social class and parental education are related to each other as was shown in Table 5. However, as previously mentioned, parental education has proven to be of great influence on the social and cultural variables, though there were no notable relationships between social class background and social capital or cultural capital (recognition or engagement). In fact, given the striking relationship between these two variables and the differences in their relationships to the other variables measured, it is worth considering that both may be expressions of a particular lifestyle or social class background. This is not to say that they measure the same construct, but that the construct of social class is multidimensional and that parental education should be given greater attention in this regard. In fact, these results may indicate that parental education should be used as the primary measure of social class when studying educational plans.

Cultural Capital Recognition, Cultural Capital Engagement and Social Capital

Hypothesis 4a:

Students who have high levels of cultural capital (recognition and engagement) are more likely than their counterparts to have high degrees of social capital.

Table 19

Social Capital by Cultural Capital Recognition

		Cultural Capital Recognition		
		Low	High	
		(percent)		
Social Capital	High	38.7 (24)	45.5 (25)	49
	Low	61.3 (38)	54.5 (30)	68
	Total	100.0 (62)	100.0 (55)	117

Somer's $d_{yx} = 0.067$ $p = 0.460$

Table 20

Social Capital by Cultural Capital Engagement

		Cultural Capital Engagement		
		Low	High	
		(percent)		
	High	35.1	55.0	
		27	22	49
Social Capital	Low	64.9	45.0	
		50	18	68
	Total	100.0	100.0	
		77	40	117

Somer's d_{yx} = 0.199 p= **0.039**

There is a slight positive relationship between cultural capital recognition and social capital (*Somer's* d_{yx} = 0.067; p= 0.460). However, as Table 19 reveals, this relationship is not significant.

In contrast, there is a substantial, positive relationship between cultural capital engagement and social capital (*Somer's* d_{yx} = 0.199; p= 0.039). Students with high cultural capital engagement are almost 20% more likely to have high social capital than students with low cultural capital (engagement). These results support the research literature. Students who engage in cultural events are more likely to have parents that show concern about school and participate in school activities. In fact, according to Bourdieu, both cultural and social capital are influenced by student's families. In other words, parents are important sources of both social and cultural resources. Specifically, students whose parents take the effort to provide their children with access to cultural activities (parents are an important resource because of expense) are also more likely to show concern regarding success in school. Parents concerned about exposing their children to dominant group values through participation in high culture will likely care about their children's success in another institution that promotes the dominant culture- the school. Success in school is an important stepping stone to a career and lifestyle that is compatible with dominant group values (Bellamy, 1994; Bourdieu, 1993; Di Maggio, 1982; Swartz, 1997).

Cultural Capital (recognition and engagement) and Academic Self-concept

Hypothesis 4b:

Students who have high levels of cultural capital (recognition and engagement) are more likely than their counterparts to have high academic self-concept.

Table 21

Academic Self-concept by Cultural Capital Recognition

Cultural Capital Recognition

		Low	High	
		(percent)		
Academic self-concept	High	32.3 (20)	36.4 (20)	40
	Med.	32.3 (20)	45.5 (25)	45
	Low	35.5 (22)	18.2 (10)	32
	Total	100.0 (62)	100.0 (55)	117

Somer's d_{yx} = 0.144 p= 0.147

Table 22

Academic Self- concept by Cultural Capital Engagement

		Cultural Capital Engagement		
		Low	High	
		(percent)		
Academic self-concept	High	31.2 (24)	40.0 (16)	40
	Med.	37.7 (29)	40.0 (16)	45
	Low	31.2 (24)	20.0 (8)	32
	Total	100.0 (77)	100.0 (40)	117

Somer's d_{yx} = 0.138 p= 0.183

As Table 21 shows, there is not a significant relationship between cultural capital recognition and academic self-concept (*Somer's* d_{yx} = 0.144; p= 0.147). It is worth noting that those with high cultural capital recognition less often have a low academic self-concept than their counterparts with low degrees of cultural capital (recognition). However, as the Somer's d and p values show, the percentage differences in this table are not significant.

As Table 22 reveals, there is a small percentage difference relationship between cultural capital engagement and academic self-concept (*Somer's* d_{yx} = 0.138; p= 0.183). However, this relationship is not significant.

Cultural Capital Recognition, Cultural Capital Engagement and Grades

Hypothesis 4c:

Students who have high cultural capital (recognition and engagement) will have high grades.

Table 23

Grades by Cultural Capital Recognition

		Cultural Capital Recognition		
		Low	High	
		(percent)		
Grades	High	14.5 (9)	34.5 (19)	28
	Med	59.7 (37)	50.9 (28)	65
	Low	25.8 (16)	14.5 (8)	24
	Total	100.0 (62)	100.0 (55)	117

Somer's $d_{yx} =$ 0.245 $p =$ **0.008**

Table 24

Grades by Cultural Capital Engagement

		Cultural Capital Engagement		
		Low	High	
		(percent)		
Grades	High	19.5 (15)	32.5 (13)	28
	Med	62.3 (48)	42.5 (17)	65
	Low	18.2 (14)	25.0 (10)	24
	Total	100.0 77	100.0 40	117

Somer's $d_{yx} = 0.052$ $p = 0.636$

A positive relationship was found between cultural capital recognition and grades (*Somer's* $d_{yx} = 0.245$; $p = 0.008$). As Table 23 shows, those with high cultural capital recognition are more likely to have high grades than their classmates with low cultural capital recognition (34.5% as compared to14.5%). These high cultural capital recognition students also have low grades less often (14.5%) than their classmates (25.8%).

Unlike the relationship between cultural capital recognition and grades, there is not a significant relationship between cultural capital engagement and grades (*Somer's* $d_{yx} = 0.052$; $p = 0.636$). As Table 24 reveals, though there is a percentage difference, this relationship is not shown to be significant.

Cultural Capital Recognition, Cultural Capital Engagement and School Program

Hypothesis 4d:

Students who have high levels of cultural capital (recognition and engagement) are more likely than their counterparts to be enrolled in advanced school programs.

Table 25

School Program by Cultural Capital Recognition

		Cultural Capital Recognition		
		Low	High	
		(percent)		
School Program	High	55.9 (33)	70.4 (38)	71
	Med	23.7 (14)	18.5 (10)	24
	Low	20.3 (12)	11.1 (6)	18
	Total	100.0 (59)	100.0 (54)	113

Somer's $d_{yx} = 0.156$ $p = 0.089$

Table 26

School Program by Cultural Capital Engagement

		Cultural Capital Engagement		
		Low	High	
		(percent)		
School Program	High	60.0 (45)	68.4 (26)	71
	Med	22.7 (17)	18.4 (7)	24
	Low	17.3 (13)	13.2 (5)	18
	Total	100.0 (75)	100.0 (38)	113

Somer's d_{yx} = 0.086 p= 0.372

Similar to the results from the previous cross-tabulations, these tables show that most students are enrolled in advanced school programs (62.8%). However, Table 25 reveals that 70.4% of students with high cultural capital recognition are enrolled in advanced school programs, whereas 55.9% of their classmates with lower cultural capital recognition are in these advanced school programs (*Somer's* d_{yx} = 0.156; p= 0.089). The more notable difference regarding this table lies in the comparison of those students in low school programs. Only 11.1% of those students with high cultural capital recognition are enrolled in a low school program, while almost 20.3% of the students with low cultural capital recognition are enrolled in less advanced programs.

In contrast to the relationship found between cultural capital recognition and school program, Table 26 shows that there is not a significant relationship between cultural capital engagement and type of school program (*Somer's* d_{yx} = 0.086; p= 0.372).

The positive relationship between cultural capital recognition with grades and type of school program confirms that exposure to high culture positively influences at least some of the school- related variables (all except academic self-concept). Surprisingly, the relationships between cultural capital engagement with academic self-concept, grades and school program were not significant.

In sum, the relationships between cultural capital recognition and engagement with the school- related variables (academic self-concept, grades, and school program) suggest that students who are *familiar* with high culture are also more likely to achieve success within the school. This is not surprising if we accept the notion that the major institutions in society (the school in this case) promote and reward familiarity with certain aspects of high culture. For example, a student whose parents have encouraged them to read the works of Homer, visit many art galleries, and listen to classical music will be more familiar with high culture than the student who has to rely on school for this exposure. The student who recognizes these markers of high culture has completed part of the learning process outside of school and therefore has a better chance of school success (Bourdieu, 1990; Di Maggio, 1982; Swartz, 1997).

Cultural Capital Recognition, Cultural Capital Engagement and Educational Plans

Hypothesis 4e:

Students with high levels of cultural capital (recognition and engagement) are more likely than their counterparts to have high educational plans.

Table 27

Educational Plans by Cultural Capital Recognition

		Cultural Capital Recognition		
		Low	High	
		(percent)		
Educational Plans	High	39.7 (23)	51.0 (26)	49
	Med	32.8 (19)	11.8 (6)	25
	Low	27.6 (16)	37.3 (19)	35
	Total	100.0 (58)	100.0 (51)	109

Somer's d_{yx} = 0.024 p= 0.822

Table 28

Educational Plans by Cultural Capital Engagement

		Cultural Capital Engagement		
		Low	High	
		(percent)		
Educational Plans	High	44.6 (33)	45.7 (16)	49
	Med	21.6 (16)	25.7 (9)	25
	Low	33.8 (25)	28.6 (10)	35
	Total	100.0 (74)	100.0 (25)	109

Somer's d_{yx} = 0.036 p= 0.738

As Table 27 reveals, there is a 12% percentage difference (a positive percentage difference) between students with high cultural capital recognition and students with low cultural capital recognition in regards to their educational plans (*Somer's* d_{yx} = 0.024; p= 0.822). However, as the Somer's d value and p value shows, this relationship is not a significant one. This finding is surprising in that it does not support the literature which indicates that students more familiar with dominant cultural values through their familiarity with high culture will be more likely to have lofty educational goals.

Similarly, Table 28 reveals that there is not a notable relationship between cultural capital engagement and educational plans (*Somer's* $d_{yx} = 0.036$; $p = 0.738$). This result was also unexpected.

Summary

The cross-tabular analysis shows that neither having exposure to high culture (cultural capital recognition) nor participating in cultural events (cultural capital engagement) is important to having high educational goals. These findings contradict the literature on the subject which suggests that knowledge and participation in high culture leads students to set high educational goals (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Swartz, 1997).

Social Capital and Academic Self-concept

Hypothesis 5a:

Students with high levels of social capital are more likely than their counterparts to have high academic self-concept.

Table 29

Academic Self-concept by Social Capital

		Social Capital		
		Low	High	
		(percent)		
Academic Self-concept	High	25.0 (17)	46.9 (23)	40
	Med	44.1 (30)	30.6 (15)	45
	Low	30.9 (21)	22.4 (11)	32
		100.0 (68)	100.0 (49)	117

Somer's d_{yx} = 0.215 **p=0.033**

There is a substantial relationship between social capital and academic self-concept *Somer's* d_{yx} = 0.215; p=0.033). As Table 29 reveals, considerably more students with the highest social capital (over 20% more) have a high academic self-concept than their classmates with little social capital (only 25.0% of respondents with low social capital have high academic self-concept). This finding is quite intuitive and is supported by the literature on the topic. It is expected that students whose parents participate in school activities, contact the school and assist their children with school assignments would feel more capable and confident than students with little parental support (Bellamy, 1994; Bourdieu, 1990).

Social Capital and Grades

Hypothesis 5b:

Students with high levels of social capital are more likely than their counterparts to have high grades.

Table 30

Grades by Social Capital

		Social Capital		
		Low	High	
		(percent)		
Grades	High	20.6 (14)	28.6 (14)	28
	Med	55.9 (38)	55.1 (27)	65
	Low	23.5 (16)	16.3 (8)	24
	Total	100.0 (68)	100.0 (49)	117

Somer's $d_{yx} = 0.118$ $p = 0.219$

As Table 30 demonstrates, there is not a notable relationship between social capital and grades (*Somer's* $d_{yx} = 0.118$; $p = 0.219$). Though there is an 8 percent difference between students with high and low social capital in terms of their grades, this result is not significant.

Social Capital and School Program

Hypothesis 5c:

Students with high levels of social capital are more likely than their counterparts to be enrolled in a high school program.

Table 31

School program by Social capital

		Social capital		
		Low	High	
		(percent)		
School Program	High	65.7 (44)	58.7 (27)	71
	Med.	19.4 (13)	23.9 (11)	24
	Low	14.9 (10)	17.4 (8)	18
	Total	100.0 (67)	100.0 (46)	113

Somer's d_{yx} = -0.068 p= 0.477

Table 31 reveals an unexpected percentage difference relationship between social capital and school program. Students with lower social capital are enrolled in advanced school programs slightly more often than their high social capital counterparts. This slight difference is interesting, but as the Somer's d and p values show, it is not significant.

The positive relationship between social capital and academic self-concept suggests that parental involvement with school activities is important to confidence in school. Parents who show concern regarding school assignments and visit the school are a resource for their children. These findings concur with Bourdieu's conceptual framework.

He claims that supportive parents are likely to be a part of the dominant social group and these parents are more likely to encourage their children in school (Bellamy, 1994; Bourdieu, 1996). The finding that social capital is not related to either grades or school program was unexpected and is contrary to the literature.

Social Capital and Educational Plans

Hypothesis 5d:

Students with high levels of social capital are more likely than their counterparts to have high educational plans.

Table 32

Educational Plans by Social Capital

		Social Capital		
		Low	High	
		(percent)		
Educational Plans	High	41.5 (27)	50.0 (22)	49
	Med	23.1 (15)	22.7 (10)	25
	Low	35.4 (23)	27.3 (12)	35
	Total	100.0 (65)	100.0 (44)	109

Somer's d_{yx} = 0.102 p= 0.325

As Table 32 shows, there is a small percentage difference between students who have high social capital and students who have low social capital in terms of their educational plans (50% as compared to 41.5%) (*Somer's* d_{yx} = 0.102; *significance* = 0.325). However, as is also shown in the table, this percentage difference is not significant. This result is surprising since the literature on this topic suggests that students with high social capital will likely experience more parental encouragement (or parental pressure) to pursue post-secondary education than their classmates who are low in social capital (Bourdieu, 1996).

Summary

Social capital was cross- tabulated with academic self-concept, grades, school program and educational plans. A significant relationship was found between social capital and academic self-concept but, counter to the hypotheses in Chapter one, significant relationships were not found between social capital and any of the other variables.

Academic Self-concept, Grades, School Program and Educational Plans

The findings regarding the school- related variables (academic self-concept, grades and school program) have been included here. They are more intuitive relationships and therefore have not been given the same attention as the other cross-tabulations.[2]

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[2] Relationships between academic self-concept with grades, school program and educational plans were also cross- tabulated. A very substantial relationship was demonstrated between academic self- concept with grades as well as with school program and educational plans. These high positive relationships support previous hypotheses in chapter one.

Grades were cross- tabulated with school program and educational plans. High, positive relationships were demonstrated between grades with both school program and educational plans. Type of school program is also substantially related to educational plans.

It was found that students enrolled in the most advanced school programs are much more likely (42% more likely) to have lofty educational goals. This finding was anticipated.

Data Analysis Summary

In sum, some of the predictions made in chapter one were supported by the cross-tabular analysis. Importantly, the main hypothesis of the research was confirmed: social class is positively and substantially related to educational plans. One major departure is the finding that social class background is not related to social and cultural capital as the theoretical grounding for this work would predict. However, since parental education is substantially related to social class, and parental education has a positive relationship with many other variables in the study, it is possible that measures of social class should focus more on parental education as the primary measure for social class rather than finances when studying educational plans.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This chapter will be divided into three sections. The first section will provide an overview/summary of the study including a statement of purpose, the research question and the theoretical position. The second section will provide a summary of the methodology applied in this thesis and a description of the findings. Included in this section will be a description of the research instrument, a brief description of the sample, and the results of the data analysis (factor analysis and cross-tabular analysis). Finally, the conclusion of the chapter will discuss implications of the findings of this study and suggestions for further research.

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Purpose of the study and theoretical position

The purpose of this study was to investigate how social class impacts the educational goals of youth. The theoretical position of this thesis postulated that the social class background of students (the material conditions they have been exposed to) would greatly influence their educational goals through other intervening variables. Thus, the question guiding this research was as follows:

Is social class background related to the educational goals of youth attending high-school?

The scholarship of Pierre Bourdieu was influential in developing the theoretical position for this thesis. Specifically, social class (material conditions) was posited to influence a student's access to social and cultural capital. Social capital can be defined as parental encouragement and assistance regarding education. Cultural capital involves both the recognition of high culture (cultural capital recognition) and participation in cultural events (cultural capital engagement). These two forms of capital were predicted to influence educational goal-setting through their impact upon academic self- concept, grades and school program (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Bourdieu, 1996).

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The Research Instrument and Sample Characteristics

In order to test the hypothesis that social class background influences student's educational plans, through access to cultural and social resources, a questionnaire was designed. The questionnaire was administered to 117 local high school students, the majority of whom were in grade twelve. The questionnaire asked students to respond to items regarding their economic background, educational goals, parent's education, degree of social and cultural capital, their academic self-concept, grades, and school program. The analysis was carried out at the zero-order level in this study. Ideally, however, the analysis should be carried to the multivariate level to arrive at a more thorough understanding of the interrelationships between the variables. Unfortunately, the sample size (117) did not allow for this (Borg et al, 1996).

Data Analysis

The statistical techniques used to analyze the data gathered from the questionnaire include factor analysis and cross-tabular analysis. The Somer's d test (along with the significance test for Somer's d) was also computed for all of the cross-tabulations and the p value was set at $p \leq 0.10$.

Factor Analysis

Factor analysis was essential to creating the scales that were used to measure the social and cultural capital variables. The factor analysis both confirmed the measures of the social capital variable and showed that changes were necessary in the measurement of cultural capital. Specifically, the analysis revealed that there were two unique forms of cultural capital: *cultural capital engagement* and *cultural capital recognition*. These two forms of cultural capital were therefore treated as separate variables in the data analysis. The discovery of these two distinct types of cultural capital and the creation of the indices to measure cultural capital is an important contribution to future research in this area. This is a notable discovery because cultural capital has traditionally been a very difficult concept to measure. Thus, any new insight into how it can be operationalized and quantified may serve to make it's measurement (in future studies) more accurate.

The Cross-tabulations

The cross-tabular analysis contributed valuable information to the study. It allowed the relationships between the variables measured in this study to be displayed clearly and meaningfully. The summary of the main findings are as follows:

Importantly, the cross-tabulations confirmed the main hypothesis that students from financially secure homes were much more likely than their less economically privileged counterparts to have lofty educational plans. Also, as expected, students from high social class backgrounds were more likely to have parents with high levels of education. Unexpectedly, the relationship between parental education and educational plans was not found to be significant. Other surprising findings pertain to the relationships between social class with social and cultural capital (both recognition and engagement). Contrary to the hypotheses in Chapter one, none of these relationships were found to be significant. In contrast, positive relationships were found between parental education and social and cultural capital (recognition). These findings suggest that parent's educational background is more likely than their financial position to predict parental support and a student's familiarity with high culture.

Other unexpected findings pertain to social class and the school-related variables. In contrast to the theoretical grounding of this research, the relationship between social class background and academic self-concept, grades, and type of school program were not significant. Students from higher economic backgrounds were not found to be more likely to have high academic self-concept, high grades and to be enrolled in more advanced school programs. However, parental education was found to be positively related to student's academic self-concept and type of school program.

Levels of cultural capital recognition and cultural capital engagement were also cross-tabulated with other variables in this study. The findings indicate that cultural capital recognition is positively related to grades and school program, but that this form of cultural capital is not related to social capital, academic self-concept, or educational plans. Unlike cultural capital recognition, cultural capital engagement was positively related to social capital, but this form of cultural capital was not found to be related to academic self-concept, grades, school program, or educational plans.

The findings regarding social capital were also informative. A substantial and positive relationship was found between social capital and academic self-concept. However, in contrast to the theoretical position taken in this thesis, no significant relationships were apparent between social capital and either grades, school program or educational plans.

The more intuitive relationships between the school- related variables were all confirmed. As expected, substantial relationships were found between academic self-concept and grades, as well as with school program and educational plans. High, positive relationships were also found between grades and both school program and educational plans. Finally, school program was found to have a substantial, positive relationship with educational plans.

For a summary picture of the significant relationships that have been outlined in this section see FIGURE 2.

It is now important to discuss possible reasons why some of the predicted relationships that were supported by the literature were not confirmed by this study. For example, the non- significant relationships between social class and the social and cultural variables, as well as social class and the school-related variables is surprising. The non- significant relationships between cultural capital (both forms) and academic self-concept and educational plans are also not in keeping with previous research. As well, social capital was shown to have a positive relationship with only one of the predicted variables (academic self-concept). These unexpected findings could be due to the following:

a. A small sample size

b. A non-representative sample with a restricted range

c. Incorrect measures of cultural capital in the Canadian context

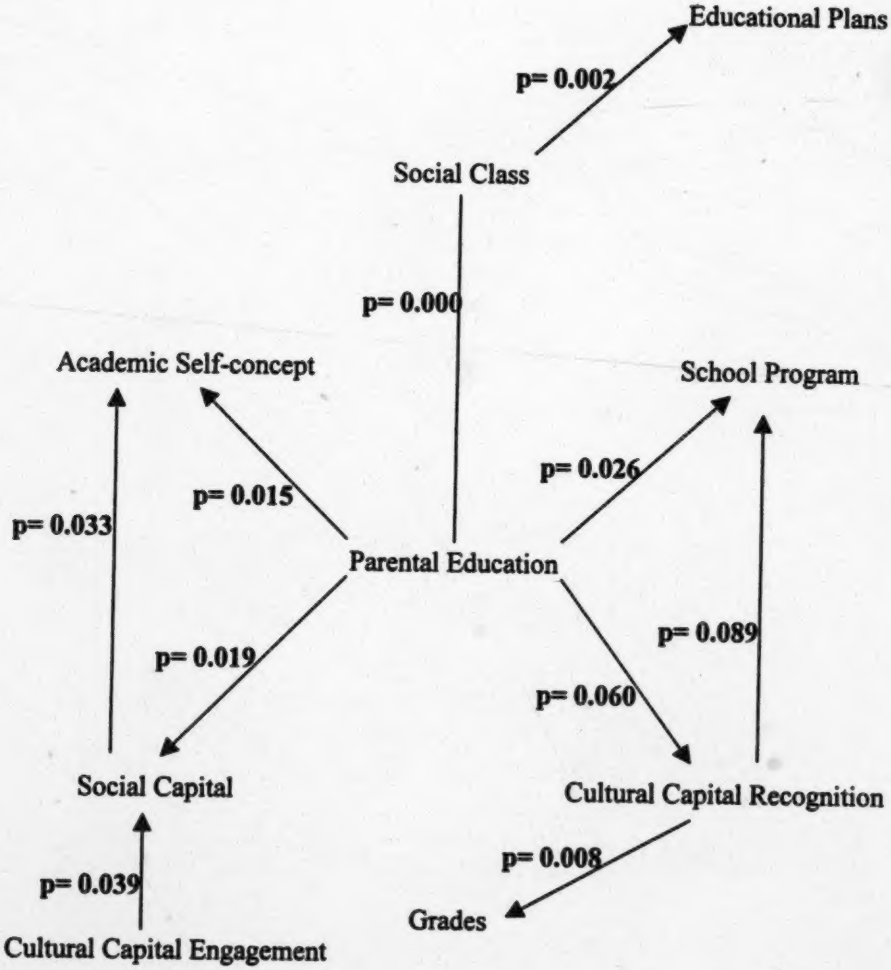
Firstly, it is important to note that the sample size used for this study was rather small. This could have affected some of the results, especially the relationships noted in the previous sections that have been found to be non-significant in this study, but are supported by previous research (relationships between social class and the social and cultural variables for example). It is impossible to say with certainty how many of the non-significant findings would be affected if a larger sample size were used, but it is important to consider the small sample size as a possible impediment in this regard.

The second possible explanation for some of the unexpected, non-significant findings could have been the restricted range of the sample, in terms of for example, student's social class background. As was noted earlier in the thesis, the sample is composed primarily of middle class students from the suburbs. The fact that students from the extreme high and low ends of the economic spectrum are not included may help explain why some of the predicted relationships were not found.

Finally, there may have been measurement problems with respect to the concept of cultural capital as it applies to the Canadian context. It is important to note that the measures of cultural capital designed for this study are heavily influenced by the work of Pierre Bourdieu, and scholars of Bourdieu whose markers for cultural capital are primarily found in the context of France. It is conceivable that, in Canada, there are other markers for cultural capital that this study did not measure. Hence, much more attention should to be given to mapping out and operationalizing the cultural capital construct in the Canadian context.

In sum, the major findings of this study are based on both the factor analysis and the cross-tabular analysis. The factor analysis suggests that there is more than one dimension of cultural capital, specifically, a dimension of familiarity (recognition) and a participatory dimension (engagement). The analysis was adjusted on the basis of this finding and the cross-tabulations were carried out using a measure of each dimension.

FIGURE 2


Educational Plans
p= 0.002
Social Class
p= 0.000
Academic Self-concept
School Program
p= 0.026
p= 0.015
p= 0.033
Parental Education
p= 0.089
p= 0.019
p= 0.060
Social Capital
Cultural Capital Recognition
p= 0.008
p= 0.039
Grades
Cultural Capital Engagement

Significant Relationships Based on Cross-tabular Analysis

CONCLUSIONS

Implications of Findings

Importantly, the main hypothesis of this research, that social class background influences educational goals, was confirmed by this study. The cross-tabulations provided evidence to confirm the relationship that has been established throughout the research literature (Bellamy, 1994; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Bourdieu, 1985, 1990,1996; Gaskell, 1992; Harker, 1984; Kahl, 1953; Kahl & Gilbert, 1993; Oakes, 1985, McClelland, 1990; Maxwell & Maxwell, 1994, 1995; Porter, 1965; Porter, Porter & Blishen, 1982; Swartz, 1997; Taylor, 1978). The study also indicates that level of parental education is a more important determinant than social class of the amount of social and cultural capital students possess. The substantial relationship between social class and parental education shows that parental education is an aspect of social class that deserves equal if not more emphasis than the economic dimension of social class background when educational plans are being studied.

Another important finding pertains to the relationship between cultural capital recognition and the school- related variables of grades and school program. Students who had high levels of cultural capital recognition were more likely than their peers with lower cultural capital recognition to have high grades and to be enrolled in advanced school programs. These findings suggest that exposure to and participation in high culture-like art, music and literature may be important to school success. Importantly, school success often leads to positive opportunities later in life (for example the opportunity to pursue post-secondary education) that are not available without being successful in school. As a consequence, the current emphasis that public education places on the hard sciences and technical skills rather than on the arts may be misguided. Since economically disadvantaged students do not have the same access as their affluent classmates to *informal* sources of cultural capital (recognition), they are placed at an extreme disadvantage to the extent that having access to high culture is important to school success and future educational opportunities (Bourdieu, 1990; Swartz, 1997).

Suggestions for Further Research

One important suggestion for further research based upon the findings of this thesis is to refine the measurement of cultural capital. Importantly, this study indicates that the concept is multi-dimensional. Another reason for the need to refine this measure was noted earlier in the chapter. Specifically, if the markers of cultural capital are context-specific, this study may have failed to measure the markers of high culture in Canada. Further refinement of the operationalization of this concept would be valuable because, as stated earlier, this concept is difficult to measure. Additional studies that devote significant attention to the measurement of cultural capital are necessary to establish what are its' best empirical indicators.

Another suggestion for additional research is further consideration of how social class is operationalized. The conventional scales (Blishen and Pineo, Porter, McRoberts) use either income or status as the primary measure of social class. However, as shown in this study, parental education deserves equal weight in the equation used to derive the categories or "scores" for social class.

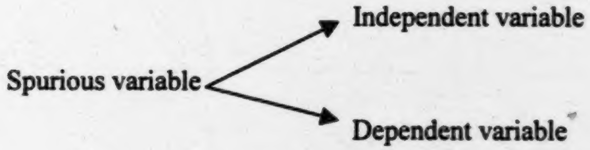
Finally, further research would include an elaboration of the zero-order relationships for which the Somer's d significance test showed $p \leq 0.10$. Elaboration involves going beyond the zero-order bi-variate analysis that was carried out in this study. Specifically, other "test" variables would be introduced when a significant relationship is observed between an independent and dependent variable. This introduction of another variable (or variables) is done to confirm or disconfirm that the relationship observed between the independent and dependent variables is actually a true one and not influenced by either *intervening* or *spurious* variables. In the case of an intervening variable, though the relationship that exists between the independent and dependent variables is a "real" relationship, the impact of the former on the latter occurs through the intervening variable. In other words, the independent variable has an effect on the intervening variable, which in turn has an effect upon the dependent variable (Babbie, 1994). Visually, the situation is the following:

Independent variable → Intervening variable → Dependent variable

By *controlling* for the intervening variable the extent to which both the independent and intervening variable influence the dependent variable can be measured.

In the case of the spurious variable, the relationship between the independent and dependent variable is due entirely to another variable that is an antecedent of both the independent and the dependent variables. In this case there is not a true relationship between the independent and dependent variable; rather, they are both a result of the spurious variable. If the spurious variable is introduced, the relationship between the independent and dependent variable is reduced to zero.

The situation can be illustrated as follows:



Elaborating on the cross-tabulations that were run in this research would mean introducing possible intervening or spurious variables into the zero-order relationship between the independent and dependent variables. In the next section, the cross-tabulations for which the p values were significant will be discussed. Other variables will be suggested that could be introduced in future research to test the relationships between the independent and dependent variables (Babbie, 1994).

Firstly, a Somer's d_{yx} value of 0.286 and a p value of 0.002 were found for the relationship between educational plans and social class background. Other variables that likely intervene between these two variables were presented in Figure 1 (see chapter 1). These possible intervening variables include a student's degree of social capital or parental support, cultural capital, academic self-concept, grades, and type of program in which he or she is enrolled. It would be valuable to conduct further studies to find out which of these intervening relationships produced the greatest effect upon the dependent variable.

The "Parental Education by Social Class" cross-tabulation produced a Somer's d value of 0.325 and a p value of 0.000. It is important to recognize that social class and parental education are so highly related that it is difficult to determine which variable is the antecedent variable. Therefore, both social class and parental education have been presented as independent variables in this research. It would be valuable to introduce other variables into the conceptual model (presented in Figure 1) that may impact on both parental education and social class. For example, variables such as place of residence (rural or urban) and gender could be introduced to determine whether these variables have an effect upon the social class and parental education relationship. This, of course, would require a much larger sample than was surveyed in this research.

Other cross-tabular relationships that would be valuable to elaborate on (showed significance in regards to Somer's d) in future studies are the following: "Cultural Capital Recognition by Parental Education" (Somer's d_{yx} = 0.139;p= 0.060), "Social capital by Parental Education" (Somer's d_{yx} = 0.173; p= 0.019), Academic Self-concept by Parental Education"(Somer's d_{yx} = 0.211; p= 0.015), "School Program by Parental Education"(Somer's d_{yx} = 0.173; p= 0.026), "Social Capital by Cultural Capital Engagement"(Somer's d_{yx} = 0.199; p=0.039), "Grades by Cultural Capital Recognition" (Somer's d_{yx} = 0.245; p= 0.008), "School Program by Cultural Capital Recognition" (Somer's d_{yx} = 0.156;p= 0.089), "Academic Self-concept by Social Capital"(Somer's d_{yx} = 0.215; p= 0.033).

For example, it would be insightful to investigate whether social class or parental education are actually spurious variables that "cause" a relationship between cultural capital engagement and social capital, cultural capital recognition and grades (and school program), or social capital and academic self-concept. It would also be of value to test whether social class is a spurious or intervening variable in any of the relationships between parental education and cultural capital recognition, parental education and social capital, parental education and academic self-concept, or parental education and school program. Introducing the place of residence variable or the gender variable to any or all of these relationships would also be informative (Babbie, 1994; Porter, 1982).

Elaborating in future research on some of the relationships noted above would likely confirm some of the results found in the present research as well as add much new and valuable information to the study of educational goal setting (Babbie, 1994).

Conclusion Summary

This chapter has provided a brief overview of the study, summarized the main findings of the research and discussed some implications of these findings. Some suggestions for further research were also provided. In sum, this project has not found many new or surprising results. The fact that educational plans are impacted by social class background has been documented in many previous studies. However, the creation of scales to measure social and cultural capital and the discovery of a multi-dimensional cultural capital variable is a unique and potentially valuable contribution of this research.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire

Age:
Grade:
Gender:

EDUCATION AND CAREER QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is a part of a study concerning your views about school, career plans, and your family. Please answer honestly and completely, as **YOUR RESPONSES WILL REMAIN ENTIRELY ANONYMOUS.**

If you do not wish to participate in this study, please feel free to work at your desk during the administration of the questionnaire. Further, if you begin to answer the questionnaire but decide not to continue, please indicate this to the one of the supervising teachers or the researcher. Your questionnaire will then be destroyed and none of the information on your questionnaire will be used in this study.

Please remember that **THIS IS NOT A TEST.** There are no right or wrong answers. Just complete the questionnaire carefully, being sure that your responses accurately indicate your ideas and attitudes.

How to fill in the questionnaire:

Please circle the letter that best expresses your response or use the space provided on the questionnaire to hand write your response. Use the following examples to practice completing this survey.

Sample items:

Is this a test?
a. Yes
b. No
c. I don't know

Do you attend high school?
a. Yes
b. No
c. I don't know

Is every student present today?

a. Yes
b. No
c. I don't know

As you move on to the actual questionnaire, please be assured that because **YOUR RESPONSES WILL REMAIN TOTALLY CONFIDENTIAL**, you should answer as honestly and completely as possible.

(1). What are (is) the occupation(s) of your parent(s) or guardian(s)? Please indicate the type of work done by this/ these adult(s).

ie. My mother is a family physician. She works in her private practice.
ie. My mother is a sales associate in a local gift shop. She helps customers and rings through their purchases.
ie. My father is a school- teacher. He works in a local high school.
Ie. My father is a painter. He paints houses and other buildings.
ie. My aunt owns a bookstore, which she manages during the day.
ie. My brother is a lawyer. He works in his office and at times goes to court.
ie. My father is a security guard. He watches the customers in a local department store.

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____
____

Note for items #2, #3, and #4: Please respond to those items which are applicable to you and fill in choice k for the items that are not applicable to your situation.

For example, if you live with your mother and father, fill in a response for items 2 and 3, and fill in "k" for item 4. If you live with your grandmother, fill in "k" for items 2 and 3 and fill in a response for item 4.

(2). How much schooling did your father complete?

a. completed junior high school or less
b. completed high school
c. completed part of a vocational or technical program (N.A.I.T. , S.A.I.T. , etc.)
d. completed vocational or technical school
e. completed part of a program at community college
f. completed community college
g. completed part of a program at university
h. completed university
i. completed a post graduate degree (masters or doctorate)
j. other: please specify in space provided.

k. not applicable

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(3). How much schooling did your mother complete?

a. completed less than junior high school
b. completed high school
c. completed part of a vocational or technical program (N.A.I.T., S.A.I.T., etc.)
d. completed a vocational program
e. completed part of a program at community college
f. completed community college
g. completed part of a program at university
h. completed university
i. completed a post graduate degree (masters or doctorate)
j. other - please specify in space provided.
k. not applicable

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(4). How much schooling did your guardian complete?

a. completed junior high school or less
b. completed high school
c. completed part of a vocational or technical program (N.A.I.T., S.A.I.T., etc.)
d. completed vocational or technical school
e. completed part of a program at community college
f. completed community college
g. completed part of a program at university
h. completed university
i. completed a post graduate degree (masters or doctorate)
j. other: please specify in space provided.
k. not applicable

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(5). What are most of your grades like in school?

a. Below average (below 50%)
b. Average or passing grades (50-65%)
c. Above average (65-80%)
d. Honors (80% or higher)
e. Honors with distinction (90% or higher)

(6). In what type of school program are you currently enrolled?

a. general program with some vocational courses.
b. full general program (i.e. English 33; math 33; social 33 etc.)
c. partial general/ partial advanced program (i.e. English 30, math 33, social 33, chemistry 30)
d. full advanced program (i.e. English 30; math 30; social 30; chemistry 30; physics 30 etc.)
e. partial advanced/partial International Baccalaureate (I.B.) program
f. full I.B. program
g. other- please specify in space provided

____
____
____

(7). Compared to most students in your grade, how would you rate your overall academic capability? (ie. what you feel that you can attain, not necessarily reflected by your grades)

a. Much below average
b. Below average
c. About the same as most of my classmates
d. Slightly above most of my classmates
e. Much above most of my classmates

(8). What are the chances that you would be accepted to university? (even if this is not your plan, please indicate the chances of your being accepted.)

a. Extremely unlikely that I would be accepted
b. Low chance of acceptance
c. Average chance of acceptance
d. High chance of acceptance
e. Extremely high chance of acceptance

(9). What are the chances that you would be accepted to community college? (even if this is not your plan, please indicate the chances of your being accepted.)

a. Extremely unlikely that I would be accepted
b. Low chance of acceptance
c. Average chance of acceptance
d. High chance of acceptance
e. Extremely high chance of acceptance

(10). What are the chances that you would be accepted to a vocational institution like N.A.I.T. or S.A.I.T.? (even if this is not your plan, please indicate the chances of your being accepted.)

a. Extremely unlikely that I would be accepted
b. Low chance of acceptance
c. Average chance of acceptance
d. High chance of acceptance
e. Extremely high chance of acceptance

The next few questions will ask you about your future plans regarding education and work.

(11). After the completion of high school, what do you hope to do?

a. Get a job
b. Pursue further education
c. Other (Please specify in space provided.)

(12). What do you actually expect you will be doing six months after graduation?

a. Working
b. Pursuing further education
c. Other (Please specify in space provided.)

If you response to item #12 was choice "a," please move on to item # 13.

If your response to item # 12 was choice "b," please move on to item #14.

(13). If you responded choice "a" to item # 12, is the high cost of post-secondary education a deciding factor in your choice not to pursue further schooling?

YES NO

Please expand upon some of the reasons for expecting to get a job immediately after the completion of your formal schooling instead of pursuing some form of post-secondary education? After responding to this item, please move on to item # 16.

(14). What type of post- secondary education do you expect to pursue?

a. Complete a program at a vocational school
b. Complete community college
c. Complete university education
d. Complete post graduate work
e. Other - please specify below.

(15). What field do you hope to enter within this post-secondary institution? After responding to this item, please move on to question #19.

(16). What job would you like to have?

(17). What job do you actually expect to have?

(18). What is it about this job that has led you to pursue this line of work?(After responding to this item, please move on to question #19).

This section of the questionnaire will include items concerning cultural events, art, music, literature, your family's participation in school activities, and extra curricular activities that you pursue outside of the school.

(19). Do you attend plays outside of the school?

a. Never
b. Seldom
c. Occasionally
d. Often
e. Very often

(20). Do you enjoy attending plays?

a. Never
b. Seldom
c. Occasionally
d. Often
e. Very often
f. Do not attend

(21). Do you attend rock concerts?

a. Never
b. Seldom
c. Occasionally
d. Often
e. Very often

(22). Do you enjoy attending rock concerts?

a. Never
b. Seldom
c. Occasionally
d. Often
e. Very often
f. Do not attend

(23). Do you attend the opera? (ie. The Three Tenors)

g. Never
h. Seldom
i. Occasionally
j. Often
k. Very often

(24). Do you enjoy attending the opera?

a. Never
b. Seldom
c. Occasionally
d. Often
e. Very often
f. Do not attend

(25). Do you attend movies?

a. Never
b. Seldom
c. Occasionally
d. Often
e. Very often

(26). Do you enjoy attending movies?

a. Never
b. Seldom
c. Occasionally
d. Often
e. Very often
f. Do not attend

(27). Do you attend the ballet?

a. Never
b. Seldom
c. Occasionally
d. Often
e. Very often

(28). Do you enjoy the ballet?

a. Never
b. Seldom
c. Occasionally
d. Often
e. Very often
f. Do not attend

(29). Do you attend other festivals (such as Folk Fest or "The Fringe")?

a. Never
b. Seldom
c. Occasionally
d. Often
e. Very often

(30). Do you enjoy these festivals?

a. Never
b. Seldom
c. Occasionally
d. Often
e. Very often
f. Do not attend

(31). Do you attend the symphony?

a. Never
b. Seldom
c. Occasionally
d. Often
e. Very often

(32). Do you enjoy the symphony?

a. Never
b. Seldom
c. Occasionally
d. Often
e. Very often
f. Do not attend

(33). Below is a list of events that students may like to attend. If you had a choice, which events would you most enjoy attending? Please number your choices in order of preference.

a. A wrestling match ___
b. A ballet ___
c. A rock concert ___
d. A " Three Tenors" concert ___
e. A monster truck bash ___
f. The symphony ___
g. A hockey game ___

(34). If you had to choose a new extra curricular activity from the list below, circle which one of the following would interest you the most.

a. Tai chi
b. Sculpting
c. Fencing
d. Dirt biking
e. Playing darts

(35). If you were to be famous, what would you most like to be famous for?

a. Being a world famous author
b. Being a world famous concert pianist/composer
c. Being a world famous fashion designer
d. Being a millionaire jet setter
e. Being a world famous athlete

(36). How often have you visited museums outside of school time?

a. Never
b. Seldom
c. Occasionally
d. Often
e. Very often

(37). How familiar are you with the literary works of the ancient Greek author, Homer?

a. Not at all familiar
b. Slightly familiar
c. Familiar
d. Quite familiar
e. Extremely familiar

(38) What types of books do you enjoy reading? Circle as many as apply.

a. popular fiction
b. biographies
c. non-fiction
d. fantasy
e. science fiction
f. other- please specify in space provided.

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(39). If Beethoven's 9^{th} symphony (which is famous for its final choral piece, "Ode to Joy") were to be played on a CD player right now, would you recognize it?

a. No
b. Not likely
c. Maybe
d. Most likely
e. Definitely

(40). What type of music do you enjoy?

a. rock
b. alternative
c. country
d. classical
e. other- please specify in space provided.

____

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(41). Are you familiar with the following composers' names?

	Yes	No
Haydn	___	___
Kirchner	___	___
Beethoven	___	___
Telemann	___	___
Schumann	___	___

(42). Are you familiar with the following performers' names?

	Yes	No
Shania Twain	___	___
Sarah McLachlan	___	___
Britney Spears	___	___
Celine Dion	___	___
Ricky Martin	___	___

(43). If you went to an art gallery, would you recognize the works of the Dutch artist, Van Gogh?

a. No
b. Not likely
c. Maybe
d. Most likely
e. Definitely

(44). Do you recognize the following artists' names?

	Yes	No
Da Vinci	___	___
Munch	___	___
Monet	___	___
Picasso	___	___
Renoir	___	___

(45). How often have you been involved in extra- curricular activities outside the school? For example, sports, art lessons, music lessons, dance lessons, etc.

a. Never
b. Seldom
c. Sometimes
d. Most of the time
e. Always

(46). If you have been involved in extra- curricular activities, what types of activities have you taken part in?

a. Bowling
b. Hockey
c. Gymnastics
d. Figure skating
e. Swimming
f. Dance lessons
g. Piano lessons or other music lessons
h. Other - please specify in the space provided.

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(47). What is the extent to which you have traveled?

a. I have not traveled outside this city.
b. I have traveled within the province of Alberta
c. I have traveled to less than three different provinces in Canada
d. I have traveled widely throughout Canada/ and or the United States
e. I have traveled many places such as Europe, Asia, Australia, New Zealand.

(48). How often do(es) your parent(s) or guardian(s) show concern regarding your school assignments?

a. My family never shows concern regarding my school assignments.
b. My family seldom shows concern regarding my school assignments.
c. My family occasionally shows concern regarding my school assignments.
d. My family usually shows concern regarding my school assignments.
e. My family always shows concern regarding my school assignments.

(49). How often do(es) your parent(s) or guardian attend school events and activities?
a. My family never attends school events.
b. My family seldom attends school events.
c. My family occasionally attends school events.
d. My family usually attends school events.
e. My family always attends school events.

(50). How often do(es) your parent(s) or guardian(s) visit or contact your school?

a. Never
b. Seldom
c. Occasionally
d. Often
e. Very often

(51). How often do(es) your parent(s) or guardian(s) assist you with or check over your homework assignments?

a. Never
b. Seldom
c. Occasionally
d. Often
f. Very often

(52). In general, what do you think that your family (or guardian(s) with whom you live)would prefer you to do after you complete high school ?

a. My family and I haven't talked about what I do after the completion of high school.
b. My family would prefer that I get a job after high school.
c. My family expects me to attend some form of post-secondary education after high school.
d. My family expects me to go on to university after I complete high school.
e. My family expects me to attend university and then pursue some form of post- graduate work.

Thank you for your participation.

Appendix B

Study Correspondence

Letter of Introduction

To whom it may concern,

My name is Sherilyn MacIntosh and I am a graduate student in the Department of Educational Policy Studies at the University of Alberta. I hope to conduct this research project as part of my Masters degree in the sociology of education. This letter of introduction will provide you with a description of the purpose of this research, the procedures that I intend to follow, and the nature of your child's involvement.

In the current context, youth are under increasing pressure to make decisions about their education and career. Thus, it is important to seek a greater knowledge of students' educational and occupational desires as well as their actual plans beyond high school.

An important goal of this project is to investigate how social class background influences students' plans for the future. In this case, social class refers to particular economic circumstances that may help shape educational and occupational goals.

The information I am seeking will be gathered using a questionnaire that includes items regarding students' educational and occupational plans as well as a number of other questions. All attempts have been made to make the questionnaire as brief as possible, so it should not take more than about 30 minutes to complete.

All efforts have been made to protect the privacy and anonymity of the participants of this research project. The questionnaire asks students to identify themselves only by their age, grade level and sex. The students will not be identifiable in the final report resulting from this research.

Your cooperation with this research project would be greatly appreciated. Your willingness to involve your child in this project will be indicated by signing a consent form (see consent forms attached). However, if your child does not wish to participate, or if you object to your child's participation, he/she will not fill out the questionnaire. As well, if after beginning to complete the questionnaire, your child decides to withdraw, the questionnaire will be destroyed.

I believe that participation in this research will be a benefit to students, teachers, and the school(s) involved. By taking part in this project, staff and students will be contributing to our understanding of the educational and occupational plans of contemporary youth. As well, given that the questionnaire deals with matters that are relevant to high school students, it may help them engage in educational and occupational decision making. A report of findings will be provided to participating schools at the completion of the project.

I hope you agree with me that this study is relevant and worthy of completing. The educational and career desires and plans of contemporary youth are of interest to all Albertans.

Sincerely,
Sherilyn MacIntosh

For further information contact Sherilyn MacIntosh at 464-2401 or e-mail: smacintosh@compusmart.ab.ca

Research Consent Form

I, ____, hereby consent to have my
(print name of parent/legal guardian or independent student)

son/daughter

____ complete a questionnaire
(print name of student)

for the purposes of the research outlined and described by Sherilyn MacIntosh in her letter of introduction.

I understand that:

- this research is being conducted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of a Masters degree offered by the University of Alberta.
- no deception will be practiced in conducting this research.
- my child may withdraw from the research at any time without penalty.
- all information gathered will be treated by the researcher with strict confidentiality.
- any information that identifies my child will be destroyed upon completion of this research.
- my child's identity will not be revealed in any documents that result from this research.
- every effort has been made to ensure the anonymity of the participants.
- encouraging my child to consider future educational and occupational goals is a potential benefit of this research.
- it is not anticipated that the findings of this research will be of commercial value.
-

I also understand that the findings of this research will be reported only in the following:

- a research thesis
- presentations and/or written articles

______________________________ or ______________________________
signature of parent/legal guardian signature of student if 18 years or older

Date signed:________________

For further information concerning the completion of this form please contact Sherilyn MacIntosh at 464-2401 or e-mail: smacintosh@compusmart.ab.ca